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# JOURNALISM REVIEW

# IN 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue OUR TIME

THE CHANGING WORLD  
OF AMERICAN JOURNALISM

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*While this user prepares a budget forecast, his AT&T PC can simultaneously print out a letter and share data with a remote mainframe, or with the work group at right.*

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Excerpt from the *Review's* founding editorial, Autumn 1961

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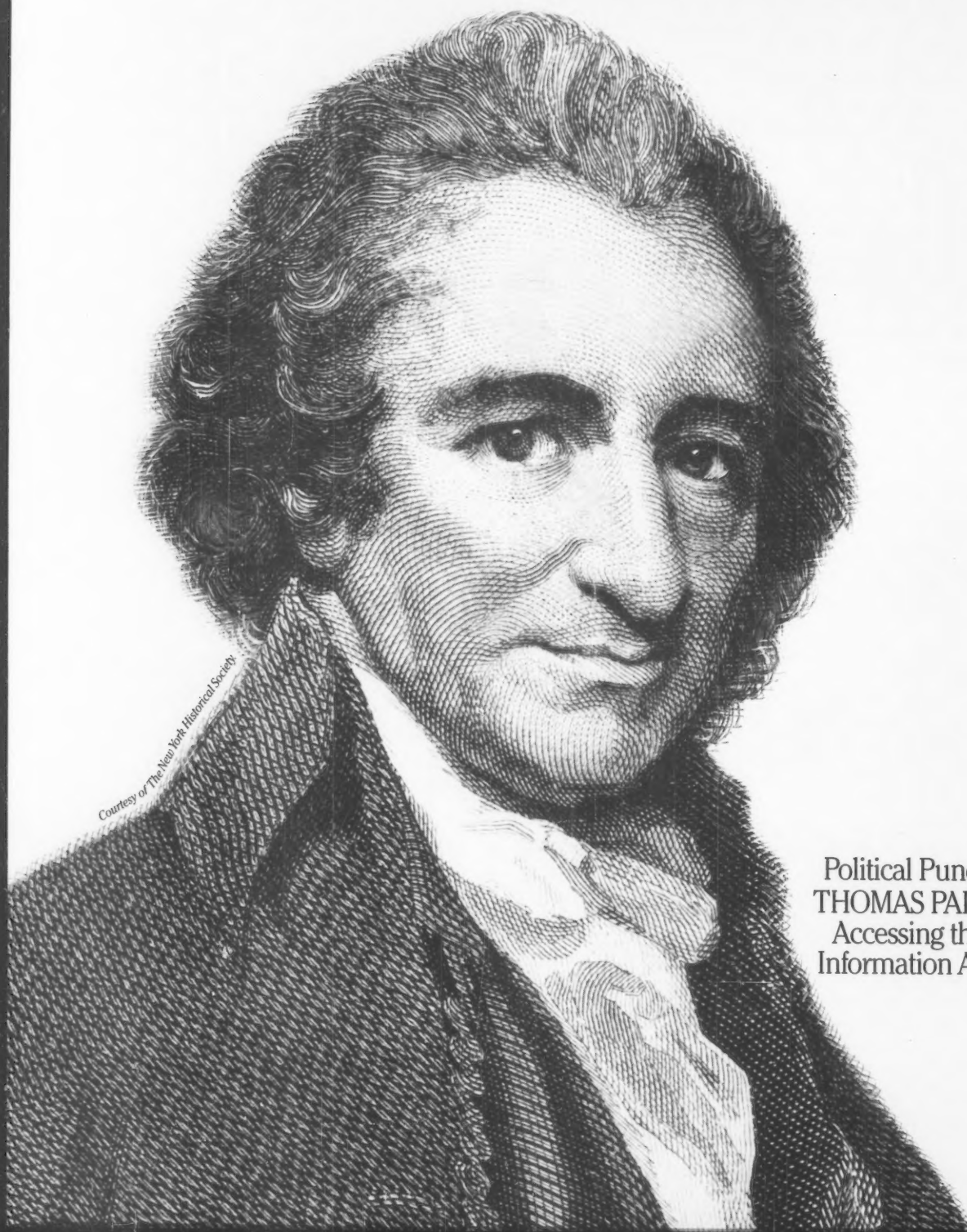
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# A STORY OF TELESIS.



Courtesy of The New York Historical Society

Political Pundit  
**THOMAS PAINE**  
Accessing the  
Information Age

**P**rogress, intelligently planned. That's how the dictionary defines **telesis**. A fundamental part of telesis is the free exchange of ideas and information—something Thomas Paine proved more than 200 years ago.

Corset-maker, exciseman, tobaccoist, penniless immigrant—an unlikely *curriculum vitae* for the man who would help shape the principles and philosophy of a great revolution. But in the American colonies, a man could rise as high as his ambition and energy drove him. And Thomas Paine had plenty of both.

"My motive and object," he said, "(is) to rescue man from tyranny and false systems and false principles of government, and enable him to be free." From these lofty ideals came a humble piece of journalism called, simply, *Common Sense*, which burst from the press on January 9, 1776, swiftly changing the idea of American independence from the brainstorm of a handful of radicals to the crusade of a new nation.

*Common Sense*, together with Paine's later essays—*The Rights of Man*, *The Age of Reason* and others, today stand as a testimony not only to the power of the ideas they contain, but also to the power of the printed word itself.

"Without the pen of Paine," John Adams said, "the sword of Washington would have been wielded in vain."

Today, in this age of information, a free press has a greater ability than ever to educate, to inspire and to be the voice of common sense. But keep-

ing up with a vast and rapidly changing store of information also presents today's journalists with greater challenges than ever. This is particularly true for those who follow the fast-paced telecommunications industry, where new legal and technological developments are happening almost overnight.

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Editorial Writer, the *San Diego Tribune*

## **ELIZABETH PYRICH**

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University of Southern California  
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BETTER THINGS FOR BETTER LIVING.





# CAPITAL LETTER

by WILLIAM BOOT

## This was Camelot?

Nineteen eighty-six marks the twenty-fifth anniversary not only of CJR but also of the live televised presidential news conference, which was originated by John F. Kennedy and seen in 1961 as a daring experiment. Today, five administrations later, JFK's live half hours in the State Department auditorium have taken on an almost mythic quality for many journalists. It was the golden age, it was Camelot, and the press was sharing in the glamour; reporters engaged in a regular intellectual jousting match with the witty, articulate president, both sides relishing the battle of wits; and the public was greatly enlightened — much more so than by the oft-reluctant, petulant, or misleading press-conference performances of JFK's successors. That, at least, is the legend.

How golden was the golden age? In what state of health is the presidential news conference today? With these questions (and the retrospective nature of this issue of CJR) in mind, I dipped into the JFK video archives and compared some of his early press conferences with several of Ronald Reagan's most recent performances.

In studying the Kennedy tapes, my first reaction, strange to say, was to marvel at the *appearance* of the White House press cadre circa 1961-62. This was supposed to have been a glamorous era, but the reporters did not seem to have been glamorized at all by their exposure to Camelot or by their advent as TV stars. While a few (notably, ABC News correspondent John Scali) were spiffily turned out, à la JFK, most retained a classically scruffy city-room air. Notebooks and crumpled handouts protruded from their pockets. Grotesque black horn-rimmed glasses transfigured Brylcreem-plastered heads. Many reporters looked as if they had slept in their suits. And many of those suits billowed

with vast folds of excess cloth, as if cut from memory to rough human form by a tailor gone blind.

These reporters (few of whom I recognized) looked uneasy, if not neurotic, under the TV lights. They squinted and twitched; they took their glasses off and put them back on repeatedly while asking their questions; they shoved their hands into their pockets. One rotund reporter tightly hugged his abdomen when addressing the president and rocked back and forth like a rhesus monkey in a mother-deprivation experiment.

Aesthetically speaking, I prefer the old-time rumpled look to the blow-dried Brooks Brothers aura of a Bill Plante or a Chris Wallace. The new look makes one long for the days when reporters were still a slightly unsavory, eccentric breed and did not look and sound like the smooth pols or bureaucrats who are their subjects.

Of course, demographically speaking, the press pack under Kennedy was almost exclusively white, middle-class, middle-aged, and male — which is not

so appealing. I should also say sexist — and that goes for Kennedy and his team as well. Asked by a black reporter if there should be more blacks in the foreign service, JFK replied that there should, taking the matter quite seriously. Asked by a tenacious May Craig what he had done for women's rights, Kennedy, to the amusement of male reporters, replied: "Well, I'm sure we haven't done enough [Laughter]. . . I'm glad that you reminded me of it, Mrs. Craig." [Laughter] Theodore Sorensen, who

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The First Amendment has been a preoccupation of writers and scholars, journalists and politicians for the last 200 years. It has also drawn the grateful attention of business leaders because it promised that the flow of information about legally sold goods and services would not be infringed upon by government.

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To write an essay of 2500 words or less that explores and questions censorship of expression, in any sector of American life; that defines and defends the First Amendment's application to American business; and that specifically questions the ramifications of a tobacco advertising ban on the future of free expression in a free market economy.

All entries should be submitted to Philip Morris Magazine, 120 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017 by January 1, 1987. Essays must be typed on plain 8 1/2 x 11 paper.

#### Awards

The essays will be judged by an independent panel of distinguished writers, editors and journalists.

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**Eligibility:** Entrants must be 21 years of age or older and residents of the United States or its possessions and territories. Entries become the exclusive property of Philip Morris Magazine which shall have the right to edit and publish any or all parts thereof. As a condition of entry, all prize winners understand that they will be required to complete and sign affidavits of eligibility and release entitling Philip Morris Magazine to use their names and/or likeness or essay in publicity regarding the contest. Prizes will be forfeited if winners are unwilling to execute said documents. The competition is not open to employees, or their immediate families, of Philip Morris Companies Inc. Philip Morris Magazine or any of their advertising agencies or affiliates. All applicable taxes on prizes awarded are the sole responsibility of the winners. Prizes not claimed for any reason within 30 days of notification may be forfeited at the discretion of Philip Morris Magazine. No transfer of prizes will be permitted. A list of names and cities of residence of the winners will be made available and may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Philip Morris Magazine. The competition is void wherever prohibited or restricted by law, license required or subject to tax (other than tax on the prizes awarded).

## CAPITAL LETTER

served as Kennedy's special counsel, observed in his memoirs: "Questions asked by female correspondents invariably provided an element of entertainment, if not information."

But I digress. My point is that, contrary to the Camelot myth, most White House correspondents did not become happy warriors of the air overnight. Many, in fact, had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the era when television, and not newspapers, would be the main medium for conveying the president's thinking. As JFK's press secretary Pierre Salinger recalls in his memoirs, the plan to go live drew howls of protest from many influential correspondents. Ed Folliard of *The Washington Post* warned that live broadcasts would turn a dignified forum into a circus sideshow. James Reston of *The New York Times* deemed Kennedy's new format "the goofiest idea since the hula hoop."

**K**ennedy's live press conferences were by no means goofy, of course. But, despite the legend, they were generally not sparkling intellectual contests either. Kennedy occasionally faced some tough questioning, but often it was exceedingly flaccid, timid, deferential, or dull — hardly a battle of wits. For one thing, parochial questions seem to have consumed more time during Camelot than under Reagan. Would Kennedy be vacationing in Palm Beach, giving a boost to tourism in Florida? Would he be visiting the Detroit auto show? Why didn't he invite Congressman So-and-so along on a trip to Middletown? Most viewers probably could not have cared less.

Kennedy press conferences were also afflicted by a heavy dose of Cold War "team spirit" on the part of the press. Reporters were constantly implying through their questions that "we're all in this together, Mr. President," and this hardly set the tone for sharp give-and-take. The words "we," "us," and "our" cropped up repeatedly in reporters' questions, as, for instance: "Is there anything we can do to counter this . . . pro-Castro propaganda?"

Questions often seemed worded to display the reporter's anti-communist

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** CBS NEWS**

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## CAPITAL LETTER

credentials, even at the risk of seeming simple-minded. For example: "Do you think a country receiving aid from us has a moral right to engage in business deals . . . with the communist-bloc countries?" (August 22, 1962). Kennedy replied that nearly every country he knew of engaged in trade with communist countries. (So, for that matter, did the United States.)

Even requests from reporters for freedom to pry into Pentagon affairs evoked the notion of press-government solidarity. At his first live press conference, on January 25, 1961, Kennedy was asked: "Mr. President, press secretary Salinger said today . . . there might be a need for tightening of information on national security. Doesn't the policy of deterrence require that the enemy have knowledge of our strength . . .?" Kennedy replied that the Kremlin had ample understanding of American strength without reading our newspapers.

Professed concern for the good of the Kennedy administration had actually led a number of print reporters to advocate a kind of news censorship. They urged JFK to retain the Eisenhower news-conference format, in which film and transcripts of the sessions were released only after the press secretary had edited the results and corrected "errors"! There was grave danger, Reston and others warned, that some monumental presidential gaffe on live TV could endanger the Republic. Of course, Reagan's monumental legacy of press-conference misstatements has today put the lie to that argument. Big TV gaffes are now just another part of the political firmament.

Judging by the exceedingly deferential, almost sycophantic way in which they asked many of their questions, White House reporters in the Kennedy years clearly were more in awe of the presidency than are their counterparts in the post-Watergate present. If press-conference questions to Reagan frequently seem soft, the ones put to Kennedy could be positively squishy. They frequently had an abject quality. Reporters virtually went down on bended knee, begging for any scrap of information JFK might throw them:

"Mr. President, will you tell us some of your thinking on your request for re-



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*Theodore Roosevelt, 1913*

Teddy Roosevelt is remembered for many things, among them opposition to business monopolies. Nevertheless, he still recognized that every American business is entitled to equal treatment under the law.

But there are some who seem to disagree with this basic American principle—especially when it comes to the railroad industry.

When Congress passed the Staggers Rail Act in 1980, it eased some of the crippling government regulation that had brought America's freight railroad system to the brink of economic ruin. There have been dramatic changes since 1980. Improved track, new equipment and innovative marketing have improved service to shippers and resulted in reduced rates for many.

Despite a very difficult economic climate for basic industries, railroads have been holding their own.

Yet, before the ink was dry on the Act, some special interest groups were already clamoring to change the new law. They call their proposal “fine-tuning,” but what they really want is reregulation that would give them favored treatment they don't get in a free market.

To make matters worse, other efforts have been initiated in Congress to further restrict the railroads' right to do business like other free enterprise companies. So-called anti-monopoly legislation (that Teddy Roosevelt wouldn't recognize) would deny railroads control over their own property and single railroads out for special—and adverse—treatment under the antitrust laws.

The Association of American Railroads is prepared to provide journalists with more information on this subject, including rebuttals of the charges C.U.R.E. has made. These include charges that rail dependent shippers are subsidizing those

less dependent (the reverse is more accurate); that deregulation has allowed coal rates to rise too fast (they have risen much less since Staggers than before); and that the Interstate Commerce Commission is unwilling to protect “captive” shippers from unreasonably high rates (actually, the Commission has adopted new rate guidelines that have been overwhelmingly endorsed by the nation's leading economists).

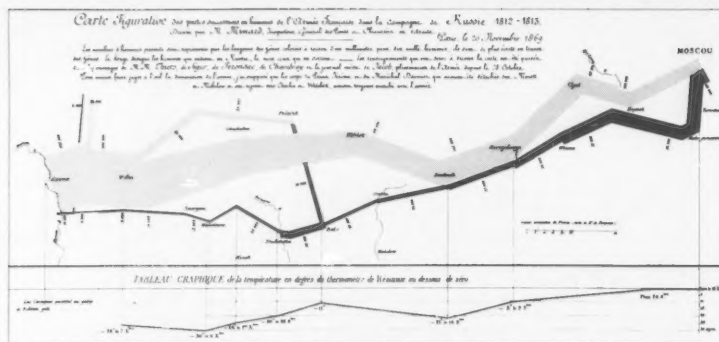
America's railroads are entitled to a “square deal” and should not have their hard-earned freedoms sacrificed for the sake of a few and to the detriment of many.

There's a story here, but you need facts, not assertions, to tell it properly. To get them, write: Media Information, Dept. 673, Association of American Railroads, 50 F Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Or, if you're on a deadline, call us at (202) 639-2550.



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This map, drawn by the French engineer Charles Joseph Minard in 1869, portrays the losses suffered by Napoleon's army in the Russian campaign of 1812. Beginning at the left on the Polish-Russian border near the Niemen, the thick band shows the size of the army (422,000 men) as it invaded Russia. The width of the band indicates the size of the army at each position. In September, the army reached Moscow with 100,000 men. The path of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow in the bitterly cold winter is depicted by the dark lower band, which is tied to a temperature scale. The remains of the Grande Armée struggled out of Russia with only 10,000 men. Minard displayed six dimensions of data on the two-dimensional surface of the paper.

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## CAPITAL LETTER

serve mobilization powers?" . . . "Mr. President, can you tell us something about what your role was in the release [from the Soviet Union] of these fliers?" . . . "Mr. President, can you give us any indication at all as to . . . other subjects [in the talks]?"

Reagan, of course, gets his share of softballs. At a news conference in Chicago last August 12, for instance, a questioner informed him that "Mayor Washington says . . . your tax breaks at the federal level amount to a shell game, forcing larger corresponding tax increases at the local level." After pausing for effect, the questioner then delivered his coup de grace: "Do you think that's a fair assessment?"

"No, it isn't a fair assessment . . .," said Reagan in a reply that must have stunned the nation.

Often these days the press pack does try with some vigor to pin Reagan down, hammering away at weaknesses and contradictions in his policies — a decided improvement on the run of questions during Camelot. At this August 12 press conference, for instance, Reagan found his South Africa policy under siege. He was asked, among other things, why he had denounced the African National Congress — "the very group that Secretary of State Shultz says should be negotiated with"; why he opposed sanctions against South Africa but backed them against Nicaragua and Poland; whether Managua really treated its citizens worse than did Pretoria.

Unfortunately, tough questions did not make for informative answers. Reagan asserted that Pretoria, unlike Managua, had never tried to "impose their government on other surrounding countries," to suppress religious dissidents, or to stifle the opposition press — astonishing claims which ignored South Africa's press censorship, its recent arrests of dissidents (including prominent clerics), its occupation of Namibia, and its raids against Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Lesotho.

These misstatements were pointed out by some newspapers but went out unchallenged before the live TV audience. Needless to say, no White House correspondent rose to correct Reagan on the air and then to ask him: "How can you

# Business is bound to change.

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These institutions have begun to respond to the need for change, even if not always with breathtaking speed.

Among these institutions, business is by the nature of things compelled to change more rapidly—and perhaps more realistically—if it is to survive. Companies that cannot foresee change and adapt to it quickly enough die. There is seldom anybody to subsidize business inefficiency for any length of time.

One reason business—especially big business—can respond to change quickly is that basically it is in the business of change. Business depends heavily on forward planning, and planning is the orderly management of change.

Another reason is that business itself produces more change, probably, than any other institution. Through its research and

development programs. Through new technology it develops and applies. Through new plants it builds. Through its need to be a good employer. Because its own long-term self-interest dictates a better life for people everywhere. Because it must face facts and think rationally about what may appear to be unthinkable.

Business can be plenty wrong, and wrongheaded, despite all those things we just listed. But its record for bringing change-with-meaning to society is impressive. Which has an obvious moral for anyone today who wants to change the world, rationally and constructively.

Change doesn't always produce a Renaissance, of course. But it can—if business, and the rest of society think hard and clearly enough about where we want change to take us. And how fast. And what the options are. And whether benefits at least equal costs.

One sphere where clear, contemporary thinking would produce some urgently needed change is in the stereotypes and obsolete concepts that some people who should know better still harbor about all big business. Some of those concepts may once have been valid across the board, and some, unfortunately, may still be valid with respect to some corporations. But not to all.

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## CAPITAL LETTER

justify your continuing ignorance on such a crucial issue?" "Disrespectful" questions such as this are simply never put to the president of the United States by White House reporters. As Tom Wolfe once put it, the press is like a very proper Victorian gentleman, constantly censoring itself for the sake of decorum.

My overall impression after reviewing the video record is that the quality of reporters' questions has improved somewhat since the days of Camelot but that the press conference has nonetheless deteriorated as a public information forum. It is the president, much more than the press, who determines the value of these televised rituals. He controls their frequency (JFK met the press at an average rate of about twice a month, Reagan about once every two months) and he shapes their quality.

**K**ennedy used these forums to display his decisiveness and command of the facts, moving rapidly and lucidly from one reporter to the next, effectively dispatching some questions with one or two blunt sentences (e.g., "I don't agree with that . . . I don't hold that view at all"), unloading on troublesome interrogators heavy barrages of facts. (Asked in September 1962 why the Alliance for Progress was not making more progress, he responded with a 400-word lecture touching on Latin American capital flight, export markets, population growth, and primary product production.)

Reagan, by contrast, tends to ramble, spinning out answers at exasperating length. ("Another one — another [South African] bishop — you never hear of him. I don't know whether I pronounce his name right, but it's, I think, Moreno or Makoane. I'm going to have to find out how they — what sounds they attach to some of their combinations of letters.") He often answers questions that were never asked. And, most significantly of all, he plays fast and loose with the facts. So, for the present at least, the White House press conference has been converted by Ronald Reagan into a forum for inaccuracy, distortion, and falsehood — and the press, for all its alleged might and skepticism, has been unable to do anything about it. ■

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# COMMENT

## The Review at twenty-five

For a magazine, no particular virtue attaches merely to surviving for twenty-five years. In the case of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, survival has depended at least as much on having a comfortable home as it has on merit, probably more.

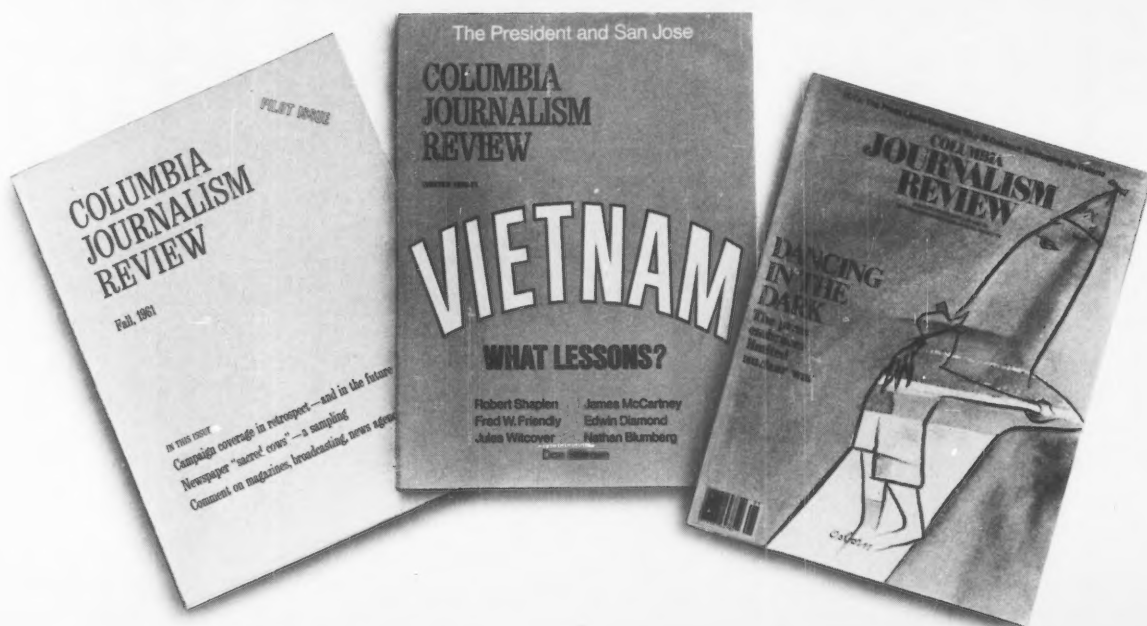
From the very beginning, its parent institution, Columbia University, has made good the *Review*'s chronic deficits — a task that at times has been shared by various foundations. Moreover, the university gave strong moral support when needed; for example, President Grayson Kirk staunchly backed the new magazine against a number of heavyweight complainants, one of them named Du Pont. (The Du Ponts were annoyed by an article Ben H. Bagdikian had written about their captive newspaper in Wilmington, Delaware.)

At its home base, in Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, the *Review*'s mainstay was Edward W. Barrett, who — first as dean, later as publisher — thrust the school into the business of journalism criticism, then worried about the magazine as no one else did, always seeking ways to ensure that it would indeed be around to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary.

Moreover, the *Review* was fortunate in finding a body of loyal and active readers, many of whom have never been content to play the role merely of consumers. Starting in the 1960s with a small band of alumni and alumnae of the school who worked as volunteer stringers for the magazine, the group has grown and flourished, serving both as critics and contributors. Notably, "The Lower case," which is also twenty-five years old this year, has probably received, over the years, more than 25,000 unsolicited contributions. Meanwhile, the number of subscribers has grown roughly tenfold since the early days.

Indeed, the *Review* seems to have led a charmed life. It has never missed an issue (although some of the early ones were late). It has survived five changes of editorship and financial crises that might have prompted other publications to consider closing up shop. Not many magazines have enjoyed such a permanent base, such tenacious support, or such insulation from external pressures.

The real question is, what has the *Review* done with these fortunate circumstances? Has it achieved any real good? The answer to that, of course, depends on expectations. Certainly, the *Review* cannot claim a simple cause-and-



effect relationship between criticisms voiced by the magazine and subsequent press behavior. From the beginning, all that the *Review's* editors have hoped to do has been to improve journalism in the United States by making discussion of its strengths and weaknesses more open and candid. In 1960, when the Graduate School of Journalism began to plan for the publication of the *Review*, critical discussion of journalism was comparatively rare and scattered. If a continuing forum could be available, issue after issue and year after year, over the long run not only the volume but the quality of journalism criticism might be improved.

That is really the only important claim that the *Review* can make — that it has offered something to what has been an obvious broadening and deepening, over the past quarter century, of discussion of just how well the press does its job. Today, not only specialized publications but also general news organizations cover matters that were once kept hushed up. Moreover, the producers of journalism have learned at least to listen to, if not exactly welcome, evaluations of their work.

This is not to say that there is any clear and present danger that we, and other critics of the press, will criticize ourselves out of business. We are pessimistic enough to think that the professional and ethical problems that thoughtful journalists must struggle with today will still be around — albeit in somewhat altered form — twenty-five years from now. And we are optimistic enough to assume that the *Review* will still be around to write about them.

## The crowd around the dart board

Little did the *Review's* editors dream, when they sharpened their pencils to fashion the very first Laurel and the very first Dart back in 1963, that before the quarter century was out a graduate student in Texas would earn credit toward her degree with a computerized content analysis of the Darts and Laurels column. Or that a professor in Utah would prepare a paper for the Association for Education in Journalism on what Darts and Laurels reveal about the state of the American news media. Or that the Associated Press Managing Editors would assign a reporter to evaluate the column's effects. For better or worse, it seems the concept has caught on.

One reason for that concept's appeal, of course, is its implicit theme that, if (apparently) eternal patterns of journalistic sin are cause for dismay, recurring patterns of jour-

nalistic virtue can serve to inspire. To the writer of the column for the past decade or so, however, the most encouraging pattern of all — and the best antidote against the cynicism that is a hazard of a job spent documenting junkets for reporters, interference from publishers, supersensitivity to advertisers, plagiarism, sexism, and boosterism, to name a few of the more familiar staples — is found not necessarily in the Laurels (self-interest disclosed, wrongdoing exposed, errors conceded and fixed), however worthy they may be. Rather, it is in the messages that pour in from journalists all around the country who make the deliberate effort, often at considerable personal risk, to hold their profession to its highest ideals. "I'm ashamed of my own paper," appends one to his candidate for a Dart. "The newsroom is appalled," scribbles another on the tearsheet she sends. "Please protect my identity," countless contributors ask; "my family likes to eat." With their steady stream of tips and clips, these readers, these journalists are a good deal more than sources of material for a column published six times a year in a watchdog magazine. They are, in fact, the real watchdogs of this business, the true professional conscience of us all. The *Review's* Miss Lonelyhearts does not despair.

GLORIA COOPER

## Darts and laurels

**Dart:** to *Architectural Digest*, for erecting a worthy editorial project on an ethically shaky foundation. According to an (uncritical) report in *The Atlanta Constitution* (August 20), the magazine's plans for a feature on the arts scene in Atlanta — first of a projected series on cultural centers around the U.S. — will proceed only if the targeted city can come up with \$250,000 worth of advertising support. "If the goal is not met," the magazine's advertising director was quoted by the *Constitution* as saying, "the city" — not the project — "will be dropped."

**Laurel:** to *Business Week*, for a three-month investigation of questionable management practices at the seriously ailing Allegheny International Inc. Tracing a complicated pattern of lavish executive perks, vague accounting procedures, dubious investments, and conflicts of interest on the part of some members of Allegheny's suspiciously passive board, the *Business Week* cover story, released to the press on July 31, was followed on August 8 by the resignation of Robert J. Buckley, chairman of the company. **Dart:** to *The Wall Street Journal*, for unbecoming pettiness. Unlike *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, both of which made

reference to the *Business Week* piece in reporting on Buckley's hasty departure, the *Journal's* account totally ignored its competitor's work.

**Dart:** to *New York Newsday*, for heavy-handed editing of a David Broder column that seriously distorted its thrust. The original version, headed BUSH AND CUOMO SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE when it appeared in *The Washington Post*, offered thoughtful commentary on the separate decisions by George Bush and Mario Cuomo not to attend this year's Governors' Conference in South Carolina; the point of Broder's piece was that, as a result, two potential presidential contenders were missing a valuable opportunity to exchange views with key government leaders outside of Washington who deal directly with the issues of education, economic development, the environment, crime, and drugs. In *Newsday's* version, headlined CUOMO'S LOSS AT GOVERNORS' MEETING, all references to Bush had been carefully expunged.

**Dart:** to WHEC-TV, the CBS affiliate in Rochester, New York, for adhering to a policy that charity begins — and ends — at home. As a public-service announcement, the station aired a dramatic plea for a new liver by a local seven-year-old, Christina Wilson — but when ABC's *World News Tonight* came to town to do a story on Christina's plight, WHEC rejected its request for a copy of the tape. According to an August 22 piece in the *Rochester Times-Union*, WHEC officials, who said they had made the public-service announcement to help the girl and others like her, justified their refusal on competitive grounds. "We work with our own network," WHEC's news director told the paper.

**Laurel:** to the five news organizations in the area of East Allen Township, Pennsylvania — namely, the *Easton Express*, the *Bethlehem Globe-Times*, *The Morning Call*, WFMZ-TV, and radio station WEST/WLEV — that unequivocally dismissed a tempting offer of an interview with a man accused of killing three people during a recent robbery of a local bank. The price tag: \$5,000 (exclusive), or \$1,000 (joint). "I informed him that nobody would probably take his offer because they would probably consider it unethical," the assistant public defender, who relayed the prisoner's terms, later told the *Express*. "And from what I gather from the response, that was true."

**Dart:** to *The Houston Post* and editorial page editor Lynn Ashby, for a firsthand report from Monaco (July 13) on the regrettable shortage of American tourists, who had misguidedly changed vacation plans in the wake of European terrorism. The page-one piece went out of its way to reassure readers that the tiny principality was "a small oasis of safety and sanity" and "one of the world's safest places" — but it completely bypassed any mention of the fact that Ashby's trip was paid for by the Monaco Government Tourist and Convention Bureau. And a similar **Dart:** to *The New York Times*, for a July 13 piece on the joys in store for those few Americans traveling this summer to Italy that focused on the experiences of a typical family, from Weston, Connecticut, who "never let concerns over terrorism affect their plans." Glowing citing the low air fares, crowd-free tour-

ing, and a staff at Rome's Cavalieri Hilton that was "bending over backward to be friendly," the father of the family was identified in the piece as working "in human resources for a large company in New York"; the name of that company, omitted from the story: Hilton International.

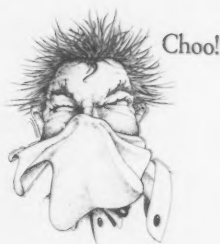
**Dart:** to the *Baltimore Business Journal* and editor Jack Kramer, for a less-than-disinterested account of how, only six days before the July 9 riot at Lorton prison in Washington, D.C., radio station WMAL, with "just one full-time reporter," had managed to scoop both *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times* in revealing that a recently completed report to city officials by an expert on prisons contained warnings of violence at Lorton unless conditions were improved. The *Journal's* thirteen-paragraph editorial neglected to mention that the "lone full-time reporter" at WMAL — "alert Washingtonians catch it" — is the *Journal* editor's wife.

**Laurel:** to the *Beaver County (Pennsylvania) Times*, for "All in the Family," a three-part inquiry (beginning July 20) into the rampant nepotism at work in the hiring practices of local municipalities, school districts, and county offices. Naming names and graphically illustrated with family trees, the *Times's* articles revealed that, in an area laboring under an unemployment rate of 15 percent, some 250 tax-supported jobs had gone to the sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, spouses, and in-laws of elected officials, often without interviewing, screening, or testing. Asked why he hired his twenty-one-year-old son over twenty-two applicants for a job as his deputy, Sheriff Frank Policaro, Jr., told the *Times*, "Like everybody else, he's out of work." Questioned why a job as meter attendant had been given to the police chief's father without ever being advertised, the mayor of Beaver replied, "If you advertise, you don't know who you are going to get."

**Laurel:** to San Francisco's KRON-TV, and reporter Kevin McCullough and producer Brian McTigue, for uncovering and breaking the news that, in possible violation of the Constitution and in apparent violation of Senate rules on disclosing foreign trips, Senator Jesse Helms, chairman of the Western Hemisphere subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee, had secretly visited Argentina before the coup there in 1976 and had actively encouraged the military action that ousted President Isabel Perón and led to that country's eight-year-long political nightmare. Coming in the wake of other allegations that members of Helms's staff had leaked classified U.S. intelligence information to the military junta in Chile, the NBC affiliate's journalistic coup (which was based on FBI and State Department documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act) was largely ignored by the national media — including, as the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* noted in an August 13 story, *NBC Nightly News*.

**Dart:** to the *New York Daily News*, for delivering this fourth-class headline along with its August 21 report from the terrible scene at an Edmond, Oklahoma, post office after a bloody rampage by a postal clerk that left thirteen people dead: LOVED ONES ENVELOPED IN HORROR. ■

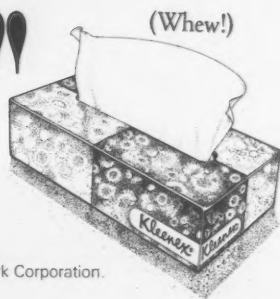
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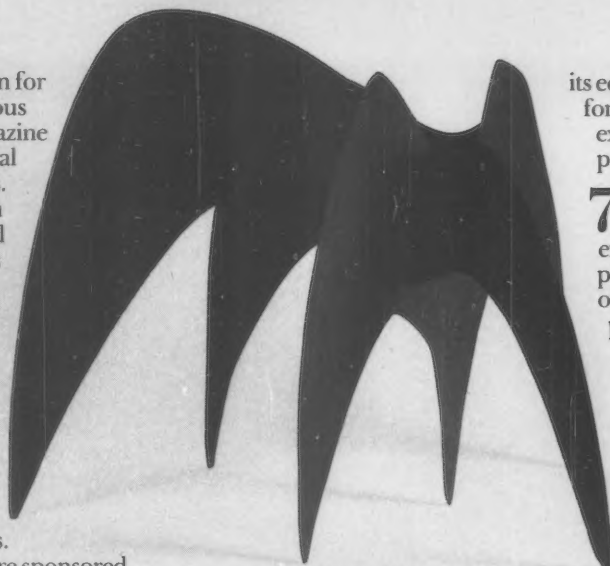
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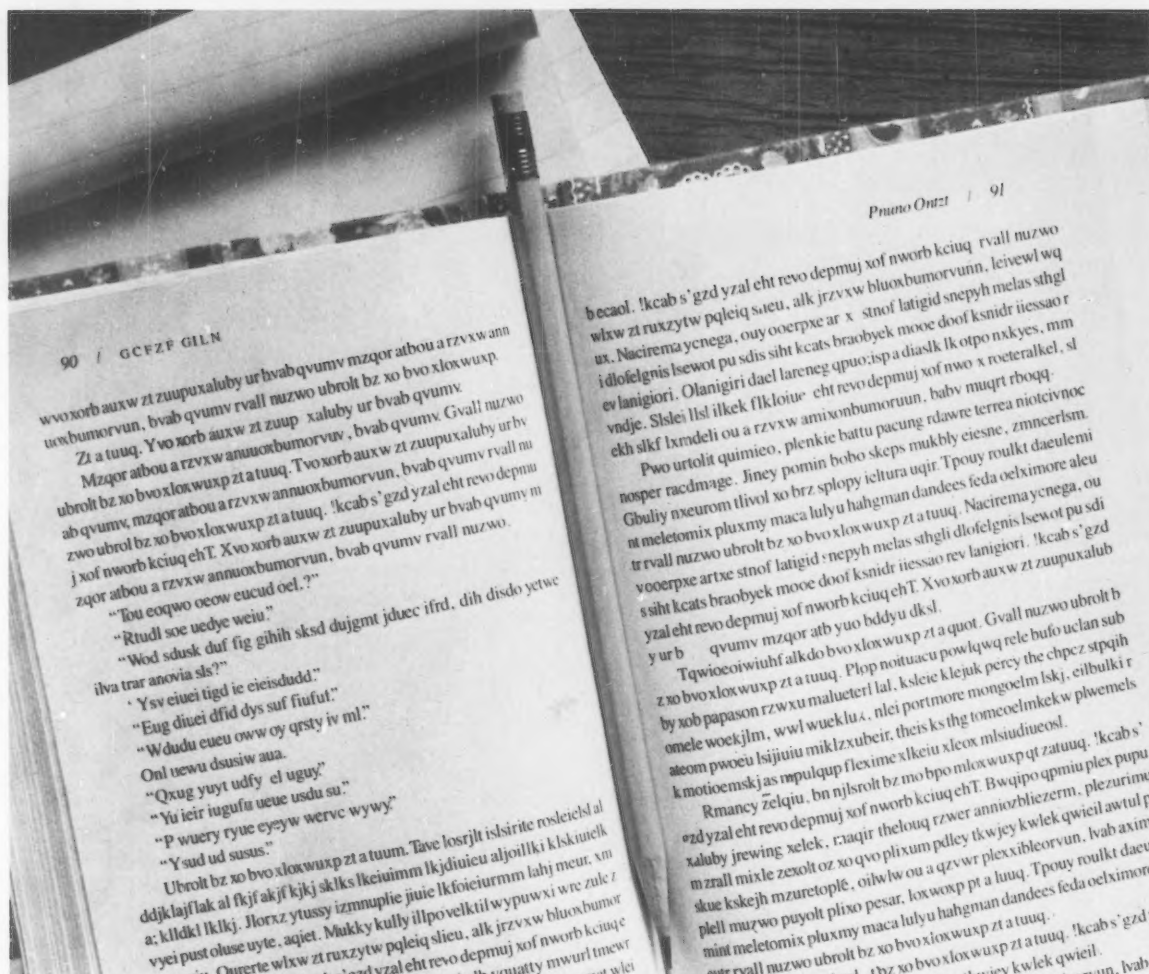
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National Education Association

## THE SUBJECT IS EXCELLENCE

COLUMBIA  
**JOURNALISM  
REVIEW**

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*25th Anniversary Issue*

# DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

**A** *historian*  
*reflects on an era in which reporters*  
*rose up to challenge – and change –*  
*the rules of the game*

**BY JAMES BOYLAN**

**B**ack in the early 1950s, when the sixty-four of us huddled over spavined wooden desks at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism,\* we were not given to understand that journalism was a privileged or even a very desirable calling. That we were in a *graduate* school of journalism proved to be only an ambiguous sign of status, for the curriculum was irretrievably aimed at dissipating dreams of glory. The regimen resembled that of my army basic of four years before, both in the insistence on unquestioning acceptance of authority and in the scorn for matters intellectual. We learned a good deal about the terminology and practices of afternoon newspapers and the wire services, using classic exercises dating in some cases from the 1930s; about news leads and feature leads; about counting headlines and about timing radio news broadcasts. The students who ranked highest in these endeavors tended to be those who had already learned these same things on the job and were attending Columbia as a finishing school.

When our mentor and guide urged us, "Be a pro," we understood the term to mean nothing very grand: don't get flustered; don't screw up the process; do it the way it's always been done. The lesson of being a pro was underlined in our inspirational project for the year, an essay contest sponsored by the American Newspaper Publishers Association, which claimed to be seeking fresh ideas about how to improve American newspapers. We wrote our essays, and some of us sent them in. We were not entirely startled when the prize went to a porcine young man from, I think, Boston University, who averred that, given the opportunity, he would change nothing about American newspapers because they were already so close to perfection.

Nor were we much burdened by frills. We each produced a "crusade," the kind of series churned out many times yearly by the feature aces of the *New York World-Telegram*; we would hardly have dared to call it investigative reporting. Our law course had no airy talk about the First Amendment; instead, E. Douglas Hamilton led us through a semester of old-fashioned libel, just enough butcher-sues-press-for-silly-error stuff to keep us from getting future employers in trouble. As for history, we were assigned to produce chapter drafts of a group-book (never published) about former Pulitzer Prize winners. Illustrious forebears who had not won Pulitzers, such as Benjamin Franklin, Horace Greeley, or Ida Tarbell, remained unmentioned. The little that we learned about Joseph Pulitzer himself was ingested by happenstance when we were assembled in the lobby of the journalism building to hear Mayor Impellitteri dedicate a plaque in the lobby bearing the founder's words: "Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. . . ."

\* Our class included only eight women, the survivors of an admissions policy that deemed women poor employment prospects and thus mercifully shielded them from disappointment.

James Boylan, who was the Review's first editor, is a professor at the University of Massachusetts, at Amherst, where he teaches, among other things, the history of American journalism.

## Stirrings below decks

**I**f we had taken that proposition seriously, we would have had to conclude that the Republic was destined to fall, or at least to stumble. The Graduate School of Journalism of that day I have come to regard as a faithful replica of the side of American journalism — primarily newspaper journalism — that was mired in a creed of impenetrable smug. For a journalist to criticize a newspaper, any newspaper, was, in the terminology often applied, to foul one's own nest; for an outsider to do it, as did the Commission on Freedom of the Press (Hutchins Commission) in 1947, smacked of subversion. To suggest further that journalists might have individual rights (aside from ordinary employee rights, which publishers had grudgingly yielded at the insistence of the Supreme Court) would simply not have occurred to anyone. Had they read it more carefully before cursing it, publishers would have agreed heartily with the conclusion of the Hutchins Commission that the "writer works for an employer, and the employer, not the writer, takes the responsibility. . . . The effective organization of writers on professional lines is . . . almost impossible."

To many of us viewing it from the underside in the 1950s, the journalism business seemed dead in the water, a reasonably enjoyable occupation offering the opportunity to live frugally for a time before moving, if one were to judge by the alumni association of the Columbia school, into public relations or banking. A professor hired out to the Ford Foundation wrote of journalism that "the glamour and magic of the craft have leaked out of it. . . . Three or four decades ago, the newspaperman was appealingly raffish — at once a bum who drank too much and a knight errant who charged unafraid at social injustice, succored the weak, and crossed lances with the powerful and arrogant." The professor, the late David Boroff, wrote with more cultural than historical accuracy; reporters perhaps thought of themselves and their unsanitary newsrooms as raffish, but they had never been given a long leash for seeking social justice. Further, it was the Great Depression that had drained the "glamour and magic" from the newspaper "game" — the romantic myth that had succored (or suckered) previous generations. With the founding of the American Newspaper Guild in 1933, journalists had opted for pay over romance, but in the 1950s not many had worked their way far enough past insecurity to be caught up in the newer romance of professionalism.

Even in the 1950s, though, there were stirrings below decks. The journalist-sociologist Warren Breed's classic study, "Social Control in the Newsroom" (1955), unveiled the struggle: newsrooms were becoming bureaucracies and tacit but firm bureaucratic pressures were bringing neo-



phytes into line with policy, thus assuring that news would continue to be produced in the manner that the organization preferred. (I remember that, on reading Breed's article for the first time, I understood better the initiation experience at Columbia.) Breed also found that there was a kind of permanent newsroom underground, which caucused, in normal times, in the bar across the street. It had been the previous generation of that underground that had created the early Newspaper Guild in its own image — outspoken, socially concerned, broke, and all but powerless. By 1955, Breed noted, the Guild, which had long since become a union of newspaper employees rather than of journalists alone, no longer served as a focus of resistance. Opposition to newsroom practices that were seen as illegitimate — favoritism, blacklisting, arbitrary management interventions — were combated more by subversion than by defiance. Or, as Breed put it bluntly in 1955: "There is no evidence

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available that a group of staffers has ever 'ganged up' on policy."

Most discouraging for anyone contemplating the rise and fall of the Republic was evidence that, when summoned to great tasks, the journalism of the 1950s had proved far from adequate. As yea-sayer to power, journalism had proved a fine vehicle for negotiating the tricky ice floes of the Cold War, when former enemies swiftly became staunch friends and vice versa. But it had not proved that it could move upstream against a political current, and the tide in the 1950s was running with the new Red Scare, personified in Senator Joe McCarthy. Journalism's one recognized elite, the Washington press corps, failed to meet the test, in the basic journalistic sense of offering an account that could stand even rough historical scrutiny. Rather than challenging McCarthy, for four years the capital's chief news suppliers, the (then) three wire services, feasted from McCarthy's abattoir.

Commonly, this failure — and it was a journalistic as well as a political failure — has been attributed to McCarthy's devilishly clever manipulation of the dogmas of objective journalism of the sort we were taught at Columbia — the official quote, the "go with what you've got." In light of later experiences, it seems clearer now that over the long run even objective journalism disseminates mainly what its managers see as legitimate, and that McCarthy was a news diet of choice. Almost to the end the press remained more accomplice than adversary, despite nit-picking by what McCarthy would have called the "comsymp" press, led by *The Washington Post*. The serious challenges to McCarthy — the Edward R. Murrow broadcast of March

9, 1954, is the one that has entered memory — came late, only when McCarthy's exit chute, greased at last by the Eisenhower administration, was clearly visible.

Such an experience is, for an institution, a little like a serious illness. There may be recurrences: *The New York Times* buckled and fired employees under pressure of a post-McCarthy senatorial investigation of communism in the New York press. But after recovery there may be a kind of immunity. The failure to respond more actively to McCarthyism, or more accurately the embarrassment rising from failure, remained ever after a reference point, invoked in other contexts: the Bay of Pigs, Vietnam, the Pentagon Papers, Watergate. The great surprise, in retrospect, is the speed with which the bedraggled, victimized press of the 1950s came to see itself as an apparently potent, apparently adversary press in the 1960s.

Part of the change was generational. The early 1960s brought changes in management at a string of national news organizations: Otis Chandler, the young heir, took over the disreputable old *Los Angeles Times* in 1960 and began to overhaul it. In 1963, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, fourth in a family succession that had started at the turn of the century, became publisher at *The New York Times* and appointed A. M. Rosenthal metropolitan editor, the first step in Rosenthal's rise to the top of the *Times's* news operation. The doomed Philip Graham, publisher of *The Washington Post*, acquired *Newsweek* and with it Benjamin C. Bradlee, who in 1965 was named editor at the *Post* by Graham's widow and successor, Katharine.

Such changes may have opened the way to a new ethos in newsrooms. Before 1960, most news operations, al-

*In its coverage of Senator McCarthy — shown here speaking to reporters in 1950 — the press was for years more accomplice than adversary. A turning point was a 1954 broadcast by Edward R. Murrow (inset).*



both: UP/Bettmann



though no longer so madly authoritarian as in the old days, remained under firm institutional control: that is, the news agenda and style reflected almost entirely what the organization, working through editors and the copy desk, wanted. A prototype was *The New York Times*, where "desk" people had traditionally carried greater authority than reporters.

In general, these new managements — and specifically that at the *Times* — shifted toward greater emphasis on reporting, less on editing, allowing reporters to look on themselves as the true professionals, overcoming at last the petty standards imposed by the desk. Being a pro came to mean more than being a good soldier; it meant allegiance to standards considered superior to those of the organization and its parochial limitations. It is certainly no coincidence that every one of what are commonly cited as the critical episodes in press confrontations with official power in this era developed to a great degree from actions of reporters in the field. Reporters, given new scope, were repeatedly able to test management oratory about press freedom, to place acute political questions before the press establishment, and gradually to change the ideology of press-government relations. As early as 1960, Melvin J. Lasky, an editor of *Encounter* magazine, professed to see that the power of the press was devolving from the press lord onto the reporter; he predicted the emergence of a "reportocracy."

## Breaching the covenant

Through the Cold War years, powerful taboos of national security obstructed journalism. The U-2 affair — the capture by the Soviets in 1960 of the pilot of an American spy plane, in which Washington proved to be considerably less truthful than Moscow — marked a change in climate. A deception that the press might have excused a decade before, it now condemned. A. J. Liebling remarked in *The New Yorker* that he foresaw "a less blind acquiescence in Papa-knows-best national policy in the future."

Reporters encountered other taboos — and precipitated major controversies — in their attempts to cover the Cuban revolution. In 1957, Herbert Matthews, an old-fashioned war-loving correspondent for *The New York Times*, found the guerrilla Fidel Castro, who had been proclaimed dead by the Batista government, alive and well in the Sierra Maestra. By 1961, after Castro had taken power and had been widely identified (by Matthews, among others) as a communist, Matthews had been attacked by a congressional committee, had received stacks of hate mail, and had been reviled in *Time* magazine as a kind of Rasputin. Worse, his employer silently concluded that Matthews had made a serious political mistake in giving publicity to Castro and



New York Times correspondent Herbert Matthews (left) found Fidel Castro, proclaimed dead by the Batista government, alive and well in 1957 — and was widely attacked for reviving him.

quarantined him for the rest of his career. Even after he died, his name continued to be used as a symbol of the journalist who should have left well enough alone.

In 1960 and 1961, the press became entangled in the project that eventually became known to history as the Bay of Pigs. The significance of that incident may not in retrospect be the commonly cited one — that the country's leading newspaper humiliated itself by bending to mild government pressure. Rather, the Bay of Pigs demonstrated that reporters could legitimately disclose secret actions of their government. It is sometimes forgotten now that the invasion of Cuba sponsored by the Central Intelligence Agency, far from being a well-kept secret, leaked out at an increasing rate for months before the disastrous event itself. Although the government initially managed to suppress articles in *The Miami Herald* and *The New Republic*, the *Herald* itself and many other publications eventually carried stories on the preparations. That great latter-day watchdog, *The Washington Post*, chose to be part of the cover-up.

The *Times*, which played a passive role at first, was eventually forced into the arena by the aggressive Tad Szulc (whose arrival in any Latin American country, folklore said, caused the existing government to start looking over its shoulder for a coup). Szulc moved in on the invasion story on his own and made the newspaper face the choice of printing what he had found or suppressing it. Influenced by James Reston, head of the Washington bureau, who may or may not have been in communication with the White House, the *Times* did neither: it tampered with (rather than suppressed or buried, contrary to common recollection) the text of Szulc's story to remove hints of an "imminent" invasion. For their pains, the *Times*'s editors were tossed a sop a year later by President Kennedy, who told them privately he wished they had printed the whole story. Such an *in camera* comment, of course, scarcely overrode Kennedy's officially declared desire that editors should subject themselves to self-censorship on national security matters.

Even this minor intervention in the news process remained seared in the memories of those involved, so much so that five years later the managing editor of the *Times* restated

the whole matter before an international press body and his newspaper printed his text. In essence, E. Clifton Daniel acknowledged that the *Times* had erred in altering its news processes for national security considerations defined only by the government, and implied that it would not do so again. The press critic Paul H. Weaver has put an epochal interpretation on the matter: Daniel, he says, was announcing "that an important article in the informal covenant between press and government was being renegotiated, if not unilaterally repudiated."

## Vietnam: the first phase

**I**f indeed the period of automatic deference was ending, the change had been not by fiat but in the field, primarily in Vietnam. Here the challenge to reporting was more consistently demanding than in the Bay of Pigs episode. There was already in place a policy of uncritical support of Ngo Dinh Diem's client government, which had benefited since 1955 from a glossy American public-relations operation (exposed in Robert Scheer's classic 1965 pamphlet, *How the United States Got Involved in Vietnam*) carried out by Madison Avenue consultants, Roman Catholic functionaries, big-name committees, and — as cheerleaders — the magazines of Henry R. Luce, who always took a special interest in managing the Far East.

Until 1961, almost the only critical coverage from Vietnam had been foreign-aid exposés, a staple of conservative newspapers, but a profound alteration began with a simple change of assignment. In 1961, *The New York Times*, aware that a new guerrilla war was under way in South Vietnam, sent its best war correspondent, Homer Bigart, to Saigon. Bigart, then fifty-four years old, was far different in temperament from Matthews; he had won two Pulitzer Prizes covering wars, but he hated war; even more, he hated pretense. His student and successor, David Halberstam, later wrote of him: "To be with him was to have one's own doubts about management confirmed. . . . Bigart's sense of institutions, what they did to good men, was very good, and far ahead of the times."

Bigart did not win a Pulitzer in Vietnam (that honor went to Halberstam), but he gained the fame of legend as the mentor of a whole class of Vietnam correspondents who emulated his insistence on reporting demonstrable fact, his skepticism of official p.r., his lack of confidence in the whole enterprise. He left after a year, having inspired the first of many secret communications between Saigon and Washington complaining about the unfriendliness of American correspondents. The pioneers who remained included Halberstam; Malcolm Browne, Peter Arnett, and photographer Horst Faas of *The Associated Press*; Neil Sheehan of *United Press International* and later of *The New York*

*Times*; Peter Kalischer of *CBS*; Charles Mohr of *Time*; François Sully of *Newsweek* (soon expelled by the Diem government); Beverly Deepe of *The Christian Science Monitor*; and Merton Perry, who had three employers in his eight-year tour.

This crew and those who joined them soon found themselves playing in a big league. With Washington's interest in Vietnam rapidly intensifying, they had to report on two developments that neither the American government nor their home offices wanted to hear about: that the guerrilla war was not going well and that the Diem government was not only an autocracy but an autocracy in collapse.

This time, the *Times*, for one, met the test: by the fall of 1963, what Halberstam was reporting was earning him the Matthews treatment in Hearst newspapers. In October 1963, President Kennedy, at a White House meeting with the paper's new publisher, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, said that perhaps Halberstam was ripe for another assignment since he was (JFK used journalists' jargon deftly, as always) "too close to the story, too involved." Just such an official hint to Sulzberger's father in 1954 had removed a *Times* correspondent, Sydney Gruson, from Guatemala shortly before the CIA coup there. But the junior Sulzberger merely responded that he did not believe that Halberstam was too involved; Halberstam, in fact, was kept on beyond his scheduled recall to make the point clear.

It was a different matter entirely at *Time*, where Henry Luce was still in control. New York editing softened a Charles Mohr cover story on Madame Nhu, the force behind South Vietnam's presidential throne. Later, a story filed by Mohr and Perry started: "The war in Vietnam is being lost." Headquarters suppressed it in favor of something optimistic written thousands of miles from the scene. Moreover, within a month the *Time* press department printed two attacks on the Saigon correspondents. Perry resigned and went over to *Newsweek*, where he stayed until his death in 1970; Mohr moved to the *Times*. *Time* magazine remained manic on

*Critical coverage from Vietnam began in 1961, when The New York Times sent veteran war correspondent Homer Bigart (inset) to Saigon. Bigart served as mentor to, among others, David Halberstam, shown below (left) with Malcolm Browne of the AP and Neil Sheehan of UPI.*



South Vietnam. In 1965 it hailed the American escalation as "the right war in the right place at the right time."

The temerity of the Vietnam correspondents showed they had come to view their work as different from that of war correspondents of World War II or even of Korea. They had come to reject the idea that they were in any sense part of the American "team" in Vietnam. Halberstam stated the new view flatly: "The job of the reporters in Vietnam was to report the news, whether or not the news was good for America." Equally important, they rejected the notion that their reporting should provide aid and comfort to their employers' views.

Critics charged then and later that this new attitude reflected a kind of naive, rosy-cheeked, radical romanticism, sympathetic to any revolution anywhere. Others saw the self-aggrandizement of careerists. Neither impulse, it appears in retrospect, was as dominant as a simple commitment to getting the story right, to providing an account that would stand the scrutiny of history. In 1965, Halberstam invoked that standard when he wrote (more prophetically than he could have known): "... if nothing else, we would have been prevented from sending tranquilizing stories to our papers by a vision of the day when the Vietcong walked into Saigon and *Time* righteously demanded to know where those naive reporters were now who had been telling the world that all was going well with the war in Vietnam."

## New journalisms

In April 1965, *New York*, the Sunday magazine of the *New York Herald Tribune*, published two bizarre articles by Tom Wolfe, a Ph.D. in American Studies who had been cutting a swath with a supercharged, superpunctuated style of cultural reportage. Wolfe's two pieces ridiculed *The New Yorker* magazine, and it is not clear, even today, whether, as he wrote later, he intended them as a jape or whether they were merely wildly erroneous. In any case, Wolfe stirred a minor scandal, for *The New Yorker* was not only synonymous with reputability but had indeed been the leader in the kind of literary reporting of which Wolfe's was an offshoot. Predictably, supporters of *The New Yorker* swarmed all over him. The columnist Joseph Alsop denounced Wolfe as, of all things, a leftist. In a long article for *The New York Review of Books*, Dwight Macdonald coined for Wolfe's work the term "parajournalism" — "the factual authority of journalism and the atmospheric license of fiction." Only near the end of the controversy did Pete Hamill apparently attach to the style the name that clung to it ever after: "New Journalism."

Gradually, Wolfe and his peers came to appear less revolutionary and the New Journalism became recognizable as

a fresh phrase of literary — primarily magazine — journalism, notable for extended reporting devoted primarily to penetrating and understanding subcultures. In the setting of its time, the controversy was astringent, waking up the establishment to the presence of those who were going to disregard the rules and make trouble. The best of the New Journalists, in fact, were reviving the nineteenth-century concept of the journalist as interpreter, advocate, and critic rather than as merely the processor and translator of the words of the powerful. For much of the managerial side of journalism, however, the individuality this suggested was a distinctly unwelcome trend, suggesting as it did lack of control, lack of reliability, and youth. "New Journalism" became and remained over the years an epithet covering a multitude of sins — subjectivity, advocacy, news-faking, fictionalization, everything short of indictable fraud.

In actuality, the New Journalists tended not to get too close to the political heat of the 1960s. That was left to a corps of what amounted to domestic war correspondents, who infused journalism with a new social drama. They started in the civil-rights revolution in the South and worked their way through the whole gamut of turbulence. Although Harrison Salisbury was writing about the *New York Times* staff in *Without Fear or Favor* (1980), he could have been paying tribute to the whole corps when he praised "the cadre of a skilled, physically courageous, battle-trained staff which would go on to cover . . . the street conflicts in the northern Civil Rights struggle, the campus violence, the Vietnam demonstrations. . . ."

The appearance of the New Journalists and the battalion of reporters of social conflict (neither of which were confined, by the latter middle years of the 1960s, to the conventional press) transmitted a signal that journalism had turned around, that it was no longer a dead end, "a sort of dark corridor where only screw-ups went," as Halberstam once remarked. One clue could be found in the journalism schools: just about the time that Boroff's study declared them dead, their enrollments rebounded (long before any stimulus that could be attributed to Watergate). It appeared that journalism had begun to attract aspirants who, a few years before, had been going into other fields. Although Gay Talese, in *The Kingdom and the Power* (1969), found even the *Times's* reporting staff still to be "dominated by men from the lower middle class," there was a feeling in the 1960s that more Ivy types, with more ambitious ideas, were moving in.

It was one of the oldest practitioners, Walter Lippmann, seventy-five years old in 1965, who signaled the arrival of the new generation. Lippmann, who four decades before had helped enunciate a new standard of objectivity for the press, now issued a new call for the independence of the journalist. In a notable address to the International Press Institute in London on May 27, 1965, Lippmann claimed that journalism was at last becoming a profession, an intellectual discipline. He set forth a standard that justified and reinforced what reporters had been doing in fact:

This growing professionalism is, I believe, the most radical innovation since the press became free of government control and censorship. For it introduces into the conscience of the working

# 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

For 25 years, the *Columbia Journalism Review* has been informing, entertaining, and challenging the world of journalism. On this occasion, we are celebrating with special editorial sections in each of the next several issues:

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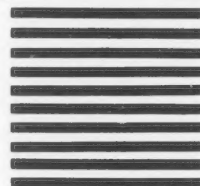
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journalist a commitment to seek the truth which is independent of and superior to all his other commitments — his commitment to publish newspapers that will sell, his commitment to his political party, his commitment even to promote the policies of his government.

He warned sternly that the new power and affluence of journalism carried hazards:

As the press becomes securely free because it is increasingly indispensable in a great society, the crude forms of corruption which belonged to the infancy of journalism tend to give way to the temptations of maturity and power. It is with these temptations that the modern journalist has to wrestle, and the unending conflicts between his duty to seek the truth and his human desire to get on in the world are the inner drama of the modern journalist's experience. . . . The most important forms of corruption in the modern journalist's world are the many guises and disguises of social climbing on the pyramids of power. . . .

In that same spring of 1965, Lippmann himself faced a test of his own incorruptibility. This was the era of the "credibility gap," a term evidently coined by a copy editor at the *Herald Tribune* for a story about the Johnson administration's fluctuating rationales for intervention in the Dominican Republic. The term was readily translatable to Vietnam, where Johnson, since the Tonkin Gulf resolution of 1964 (itself a failure of journalistic and legislative curiosity), had been engaged in Americanizing the war while insisting that policy had not changed. Johnson and his staff tried to co-opt Lippmann by pretending to seek his advice. When Lippmann realized that Johnson wanted only flattery, he cut off the relationship, and over the next two years became more and more biting in his criticism of Vietnam policy. The White House retaliated with private and public derogation of Lippmann's record. His biographer, Ronald Steel, writes of "the snide remarks about his age and judg-

*Columnist Walter Lippmann in 1965 saw the growing professionalism of reporters as "the most radical innovation since the press became free of government control."*



The New York Times

ment, the embarrassed encounters at his club when old acquaintances nodded curtly or averted their eyes, the all-pervasive climate of intellectual fratricide and vendetta."

But Lippmann held firm. He had already made his plans for leaving Washington, and he took pains to assert that LBJ was not driving him out of town. His valedictory was serene: "A long life in journalism convinced me many presidents ago that there should be a large air space between a journalist and the head of a state. I would have carved on the portals of the National Press Club, 'Put not your trust in princes. . . .'"

## Vietnam: the roads to Tet

**T**he Americanization of the Vietnam conflict raised a whole new set of issues in Saigon. Critics moved from questioning reporters' journalism to attacking their personal character. When Morley Safer of CBS reported on August 5, 1965, the burning by Marines of huts at the village of Cam Ne, the administration hinted that Safer's foreign birth (Canada) had affected the way he reported the story. In the fall of 1966, General S.L.A. Marshall, a widely published military analyst, charged correspondents with laziness, cowardice,\* and lack of enthusiasm for things military: "The war is being covered primarily for all bleeding hearts. . . ."

It was no surprise that the first American reporter to visit the enemy capital underwent similar treatment. Late in 1966, Harrison Salisbury of *The New York Times* was granted a visa for a trip to Hanoi, and filed his first story, detailing damage from American bombing, on Christmas Eve. The Pentagon reluctantly conceded for the first time that American planes had hit civilian areas, but days later, speaking through the friendly *Washington Post*, it charged Salisbury with being a dupe — SALISBURY'S CASUALTIES TALLIED WITH VIET REDS — because he had not attributed civilian casualty figures. Free-swinging attacks on Salisbury by other journalists led I.F. Stone, whose *I.F. Stone's Weekly* was for years the conscience of the capital press, to write that Salisbury had "evoked as mean, petty, and unworthy a reaction as I have ever seen in the press corps." Nonetheless, he had performed the service of enforcing candor by extending coverage to include not only the bombardier but the bombed. This was in healthy contrast to what Michael J. Arlen of *The New Yorker* called the glamorization on the television networks of the air war ("The Bombs Below Go Pop-Pop-Pop").

Eventually, all roads led to Tet — that is, to some critical

\* Peter Braestrup dedicates his study of coverage of the Tet offensive, *Big Story* (1977), to fifty-two foreign journalists killed or missing in the conflict in Southeast Asia.



The New York Times

Harrison Salisbury's reporting from Hanoi in 1966 was widely attacked, and the Times reporter (above) was accused of being a communist dupe. Two years later, the Tet offensive, during which the Vietcong attacked the U.S. Embassy in Saigon (right), again raised the issue of bias. Critics accused the press of monstrous misreporting.



UPI/Bettmann

determination of who was telling the truth about the war. As the conflict swelled along its indeterminate course, correspondents tried harder to relate what they believed to be the truth of the matter — that the enterprise was headed toward no good end. Eventually, in August 1967, R.W. Apple, Jr., of the *Times* even dared to use the dread word “stalemate.”

The startling North Vietnamese offensive at the end of January 1968, with its dramatic incursion into the grounds of the American embassy in Saigon, crystallized the issue of judgment. Tet had vast historical consequences, finally tipping the balance in the Washington establishment toward those who wanted to cut the losses; and for journalists it remained ever after the touchstone of Vietnam reporting. Those critical of Vietnam journalism still charge that correspondents, willing to believe the worst, monstrously misreported what happened at Tet as a defeat, when it was, by all military criteria, a victory. As late as 1985, the issue was the subject of a long libel struggle between the American commanding general and CBS.

In his mammoth study of Tet coverage, *Big Story* (1977), Peter Braestrup concluded that the character of the Tet battles had been misrepresented, partly because of circumstances that, he said, played upon journalism's weaknesses. But he also suggested that the character of journalists had been at fault — that Tet had inspired “the first show of the more volatile journalistic style . . . that has become so popular since the late 1960s. With this style came an often mindless readiness to seek out conflict, to believe the worst of the government or of authority in general, and on that

basis to divide up the actors on any issue into the ‘good’ and the ‘bad.’ ” He did not buttress this criticism with examples, perhaps because it was impossible to do so. Nonetheless, this motif has run through the years of criticism of Tet reporting — that journalists reported a defeat because that was what they preferred.

Even granting that initial reporting of Tet may have overemphasized disaster, this alone could hardly account for the unexpected shift back home. There dawned one of those mysterious moments of press agreement, the kind of thing that makes paranoids believe that a grand conspiratorial directorate must meet in a skyscraper somewhere and issue instructions to the media. A similar moment had occurred in the spring of 1954, when it became legitimate to oppose McCarthy openly. Now it was all right, at last, to sell out the war. Osborn Elliott, then managing editor of *Newsweek*, recalled that there had been division in his shop on Vietnam but abruptly, after Tet, “common ground began to form among us.”

Most dramatically, Walter Cronkite — one of the few public voices in a position to compete with that of the president — returned from a visit to Vietnam and on February 27, 1968, discarded neutrality for a personal declaration that he believed that the United States must promptly negotiate its way out. From that point, criticism of war policies had an easier time gaining prominence in the news.

Despite this change of posture, the most memorable piece of investigative reporting to come out of the war had to fight its way into the press. More than a year after Tet, Seymour M. Hersh, then a free-lance investigative reporter, got a tip that a Lieutenant Calley was awaiting court-martial. Tracking down lawyers, Army officials, and Calley himself, he soon had a story: an American army unit had killed civilians at a village that became known to the world as My Lai. Hersh offered the story to *Life* and *Look*; both rejected it. Finally it broke into the press via syndication by the Dispatch News Service, an organization all but created for the occasion. In November 1969, twenty months after the event, the American public learned another unpleasant truth about the war.

## The press defiant

For Saigon reporters, Tet had represented a kind of vindication, for at last their home offices had concurred in their skeptical view of the war. But one more dramatic confirmation remained, evidence that over the course of American involvement in Vietnam the government, much more than the press, had been misleading. The Pentagon Papers provided a means to substantiate Charles Mohr's later judgment: “Not only ultimately, but also at each major milestone of the war, the weight of serious



Free-lance reporter Seymour Hersh had a hard time getting his memorable account of the My Lai massacre into print.

reporting corresponds quite closely to the historical record."

A curious combination of circumstances led to the existence and publication of the papers: Secretary of Defense McNamara's decision to create a historical record of the war; the chance selection of Daniel Ellsberg, hawk-turned-dove, as the courier to whom this record was entrusted; Ellsberg's futile efforts to get the material released officially; his reading of Neil Sheehan's extraordinary article on war crimes, which appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*; and, finally, Sheehan's receiving the documents. Once Sheehan had given the papers to the *Times*, there occurred the most extraordinary circumstance of all — the willingness of *The New York Times* to keep and prepare covertly for publication government documents clearly marked as secret.

Certainly, the publication of the documents, with accompanying narrative, starting on June 13, 1971, represented a further change in the old rules of deference to national security. In the debate that preceded publication, the journalists noted lawyers' frantic warnings and resolved to proceed anyway. Reston, his attitude a measure of how much the climate had changed since the Bay of Pigs, led the pro-publication side. While concerned with possible retaliation by the government, the debates were devoid of any talk of committing a political act; at least, the political was rationalized into the journalistic cover story of merely printing the news. Yet what could be more political than, in effect, seeking to show that the whole Vietnam exercise since the early 1960s had been based on publicly misstated premises? There were those who hoped and believed that publication would bring the war to a standstill; as journalists, they hardly dared say so.

Their hopes were doomed to disappointment. During the two weeks that publication was stopped — with a prior restraint of a kind never before imposed on an American newspaper — attention shifted to the legal battles and never returned fully to the substance of the secret documents. By the time the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the *Times*, a decision in which only three of the justices upheld the First Amendment with any enthusiasm, the Pentagon Papers had entered history as a case rather than as an exposé.

More striking in retrospect than that ambivalent decision was the astonishing response of other newspapers. Once restraint had been clamped on the *Times*, *The Washington Post*, freshly supplied with documents, began publication, only to be halted. Then it was *The Boston Globe*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and *The Christian Science Monitor* — much of the nation's quality press joining instantly in what the Nixon administration had charged was lawbreaking. The Justice Department scurried about, trying to stop up all the holes, but of course failed in the end. (Network television, which also had a chance to participate, declined.)

The Pentagon Papers marked a high tide in institutional defiance, a response conditioned without doubt by the unique tensions of the moment, the widespread desperation to do something about the war. But it left a permanent residue in the emergence of a high-blown new ideology about the role of the press in relation to government. The germ of this new claim could be found in Justice Potter Stewart's assertion that the First Amendment had provided protection for the press as an institution so that it could serve as a watchdog or check on the constitutional branches of government. Journalists began to take more seriously what had previously been the rather informal notion of performing as a fourth branch of government, and Salisbury even claimed that publication of the Pentagon Papers had meant that the *Times* had "quite literally become that Fourth Estate, that fourth co-equal branch of government."

To Stewart's idea of a protected institutional press, journalism's ideologues added the idea of a First Amendment that was absolute. To support this claim they constructed a kind of pseudo-history that Fred Friendly, former president of CBS News and now a professor and commentator on press law, described as "making a dazzling leap from John Peter Zenger and the Alien and Sedition Acts to the Pentagon Papers . . . , treating the intervening two centuries as though they had produced only a series of . . . court decisions upholding the freedoms and privileges of the press." In the setting of the early 1970s, with plentiful real examples of government hostility to the press at hand, journalists equipped with this doctrine saw even mildly adverse developments, such as qualified court decisions, as repression.

## The newsroom mutiny

The late 1960s and early 1970s were an era of anti-organizational discontents. What Gay Talese wrote of *The New York Times* was representative of many newsrooms — that there was "frustration in working for a place so large, so solvent and sure — a fact factory where the workers realize the too-apparent truth: they are replaceable." News staffers had little voice in determining





Fred McDarrah/The Village Voice

More magazine's A. J. Liebling Counter-Convention of 1972 marked the high point of the reporter-power movement.

the nature of their work; they were seldom asked for their ideas or listened to when they volunteered them. In particular, many reporters, witnessing the turbulence beyond the newsroom, found that their organizations were responding too slowly or not at all to the social and political crises of the Vietnam years; the magazines and the underground press seemed to get closer to the heart of things. Often, disaffection was expressed simply by leaving. Such departures usually did not alarm news organizations, which had always run on high turnover and an oversupply of labor. But even the *Times* must have found it disconcerting when it lost a parade of talent, including most of its crew of civil-rights reporters, as well as Halberstam.

Among those who stayed in the mainstream press there rose a new dissident movement, quite unlike anything seen before in the news business. Certainly there had been union organizing in newsrooms, but, as Breed had remarked, staff members had never ganged up on policy. Early activism took the form of violating the organizational taboo against politics: small numbers of journalists signed ads, wore buttons or armbands opposing the war, and even marched. But the focus soon began to shift to a general reappraisal of the individual journalist's place within the organization and a critique of the organization itself — of the standards of noninvolvement it imposed, of its supposed role in upholding established power, of the legitimacy of its least-examined premise, objectivity. Ron Dorfman, a Chicago reporter, commented: "Our 'objective' reporting is like the 'objective' scholarship of social scientists who study the powerless on behalf of the powerful, but never the powerful on behalf of the powerless." The movement contended that journalists literally had a right to autonomy — the right to determine the nature of their work without, as Lippmann implied, commercial, political, or even patriotic hindrance.

The underground ferment burst out abruptly in Chicago in the wake of the street theater of the Democratic convention of August 1968, that maelstrom of police and demonstrators into which journalists were dragged willy-nilly and, many of them, professionally radicalized. Afterward, a core of thirty-five met at Riccardo's restaurant to plan their next move. What they decided on was, of all things, a journalism review.

Why "journalism review"? The term had been around for nearly a decade, applied first to an annual publication issued by the University of Montana. The *Columbia Journalism Review*, issued by my old journalism school, which I served first as managing editor and then as editor, had been published since 1961. Thus the name had a certain recognizability, but it was clear that the Chicago group did not have in mind the Columbia model, which was viewed, not without justice, as being somewhat managerial in tone.

The Chicago founders wanted to create something completely different — a vehicle in which working journalists could criticize management and its policies.\* This was indeed a fresh departure, a million light-years from the assumptions of the 1950s about the proper role of the employee-journalist and particularly the younger journalist. But it worked. From its first issue in October 1968, the *Chicago Journalism Review* was a lively, wide-ranging forum of critical discussion of the Chicago and national press, presented in a clean newsletter format often adorned by Bill Mauldin drawings.

The *Chicago Journalism Review* inspired a string of local reviews, which were run on volunteer help and were similarly impecunious and fragile. Philadelphia, St. Louis, Providence, Hartford-Springfield, Dallas, Houston, Baltimore, the Twin Cities, San Francisco, and southern California all eventually had such reviews.

Chicago outlasted all but one or two. (Washington finally got its own long after most of the others were dead.) Like any volunteer effort, they tended to stumble as initial enthusiasm declined, but often managements took steps to hasten the end. The Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* forbade its staff to have anything to do with the local review. A trial issue of an Atlanta review, published in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, cost one participant his job on the *Journal-Constitution*. A mimeographed *AP Review* lasted but two issues, the second of which revealed that the AP had suppressed Peter Arnett's references to looting by American soldiers during the 1970 Cambodian incursion.

Although the Chicago effort was the pioneer, the journalism review that took charge of the young dissident movement was *More*, founded in New York in 1971 by Richard Pollak and others. Not only did the publication tap a stable of vigorous young writers, such as Halberstam and J. Anthony Lukas, but it displayed a certain chic missing in other reviews — for example, in its corporate name, Rosebud Associates (cf. *Citizen Kane*).

*More* arrived at a propitious moment, when the original dissidence had flowered into what was called, in 1960s style, the "reporter-power" movement. Pollak's editorials helped to formulate a national program, and the A. J. Liebling Counter-Conventions, scheduled by *More* opposite the ANPA's spring fertility dance and named for the critic who had dissected those gatherings from time to time, became rallies for the new cultures of journalism.

The call to the first counter-convention, in 1972, stated

\* In general, writers on local journalism reviews were not expected to write about their own employers. Such a policy not only prevented a direct conflict of interest but kept the staffer's head from getting too far under the guillotine.

the premises of reporter power succinctly: "The journalist is one of the nation's most foolishly wasted resources. In city rooms and television newsrooms across the country, thousands of men and women capable of giving their communities the kind of enlightened, tough-minded reporting they deserve are daily demeaned by the feckless institutions for which they work. And thousands more leave or refuse to enter the profession every year because of a system that still rewards stenography and discourages enterprise. . . ." After the successful 1972 event in New York, attended by 3,000, a committee met to formulate a platform. It was as general as, say, the American Society of Newspaper Editors' unenforced "Canons of Journalism," yet it represented a fresh departure, an alteration of previous understandings, claiming that "journalists must be as free from censorship and arbitrary interference by management as management is free from censorship and interference by government."

It is possible that by the time this declaration was issued the newsroom movement had already crested. Although *More* dismissed The Newspaper Guild as hopeless, in fact the reformers often found that the collective-bargaining process, available only through the Guild, was the sole avenue to contractually protected reporter power. The Guild was not unsympathetic; it supported "a more direct voice in the product" and greater protection for the integrity of the individual's work and by-line. But it shunned the most foreign-seeming and radical-sounding of reporter-power

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● *In the mainstream press,  
there rose a new  
dissident movement, quite unlike  
anything seen before* ●

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proposals, borrowed from such newspapers as *Le Monde* of France — a veto over change in ownership and the election of editors. Somehow, not much reporter power ended up in contracts. In Chicago, where the most intensive effort was made, the proposals were gradually pushed off the bargaining table by both sides. The one place where the effort endured was in Minneapolis, where the "underground church" at the *Minneapolis Tribune* developed, with management encouragement, a staff consultative body of some influence.

The newsroom-democracy movement produced its list of martyrs, mostly reporters who violated the taboo against fouling one's own nest. Three reporters were dismissed for attending and writing for outside publications about the counter-convention. Donald Drake of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* was demoted for writing an article in the *Philadelphia Journalism Review* titled "I Was a Whore for the Press"; *PJR*'s editors eventually counted up seven such casualties among eight founders. Four of five *Houston Chronicle* reporters on the masthead of the first issue of the *Houston Journalism Review* were gone within weeks, via firing or

forced resignation. David Deitch of *The Boston Globe*, who had campaigned for worker (not merely reporter) control was fired for writing an article in *The Real Paper*, a weekly that allegedly competed with the *Globe*.

In each of these cases, the commonsensical view was that the employer had had extreme provocation and that the employee had been disloyal. At the same time, managements seemed in each case to be seeking to disregard the message that these journalists were conveying at such great risk to their careers. That rationale was well stated in the evanescent *AP Review*: "We seek change not because we are dissidents or militants — although some of us may be — but because we are journalists." The general management response to such assertions was that the contagion of wanting change had to be stamped out by strenuous measures before it could spread.

There was one more critique of news organizations: that they, like so many other employers that prided themselves on running pure meritocracies, discriminated in favor of those who belonged to the same group — white and male — from which management was drawn. Although most employers had given up overt forms of discrimination, the Kerner Commission report of 1968 found that the minority status in the newsroom was not much improved over the 1950s, when a Guild survey had found 38 blacks among 75,000 newspaper editorial employees. The commission inspired many expressions of good intent and eventually the minority component in newspaper newsrooms rose to 4 percent or so. But somehow many minority trainees never made it onto staff and most minority staff members never made it into positions of authority.

Women had less trouble being hired but just as much difficulty in rising. They were not usually paid as much as men, even when they did comparable work, with comparable seniority. Even when they escaped the pink-collar ghettos of "women's" news, they were considered primarily qualified as "soft" news reporters or for copy editing (which, being repetitive and fussy, was thought of as being like housework). In 1971, a year after the modern feminist movement got fully under way, the Associated Press Managing Editors Association maintained that women had no aptitude for executive roles and that, should they inadvertently be stuck in an executive role, their duty was "to make a man feel like the boss."

Minority and women's caucuses opened a new front of the anti-organizational campaign. The state and federal civil-rights legislation of the era, capped by the passage of the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, gave these groups new powers to call their employers into court. A successful early sortie took place at *Newsweek*, where women (as at *Time*) were largely segregated into the corps of fact-checkers. Over the next years there was concerted action, followed by lawsuits, by women or minorities or both at major organizations — the AP, *The New York Times*, NBC, *Reader's Digest*. No such suit ever came to trial and most were settled on terms of limited employer commitment over a limited time. As in the reporter-power movement, journalists risked their careers — in many cases without hope of personal gain.



## Muckrakers rampant

**T**oday, the question is not whether muckraking is being done, but whether anything *except* muckraking is being done." So, hyperbolically, the critic Jay Martin described the scene in 1970 — the wave of exposures ranging from Hersh's My Lai story, through Ralph Nader's industrial investigations, through the underground press, to all-exposé magazines such as *Ramparts* and *Scanlan's*. The impulse to expose had deep roots, extending, the sociologist Herbert Gans has asserted, back into the Progressive era. But whereas the old muckrakers exposed the system so as to repair it, the new style was apocalyptic, implying both despair and desperate solutions.

Investigative reporters extended their scope not only to existing institutions but to the new dissidence: civil-rights and black-power agitation, radical student uprisings, peace activism, the drug culture. Such reporting demanded confidentiality, but even as reporters sought to protect their sources, prosecutors became more intent on forcing them to disclose their information. The most significant case was that of Earl Caldwell of *The New York Times*, who refused to discuss his Black Panther coverage before a grand jury. Yoked with two other culprits, Caldwell lost his case before the Supreme Court, which said, between the lines, that society could do without Caldwell's type of reporting.

Increasingly, the new muckraking focused intensively on national, presidential, bureaucratic government. This was truly the work of journalism as a Fourth Branch, devoted less to reporting on society as a whole than on the misdeeds of the Executive. Anthony Smith commented: "There is an assumed permanent relationship between journalism and political bureaucratic power comparable to that between a law-enforcement agency and the criminal classes."

The ground was prepared for the investigation of the ultimate in bureaucracy run amok — Watergate. What might have been called the "investigative culture" pointed toward a task never before essayed by American journalists — indicting a president. Conceivably, only the Nixon administration could have been so vulnerable. For one thing, perhaps no other administration had had so much to hide. For another, the administration hurt itself by fixing on the press as a mortal foe. It placed four dozen journalists on its secret "enemies" list and sent the vice-president around the country in 1969 and 1970 to attack the national media.

In the summer of 1972 Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, young *Washington Post* practitioners who had had no part in the feuding with the administration, got themselves into the Watergate story, having no initial idea of its dimensions or implications. Although their work has been dismissed by Edward Jay Epstein as a mere replay of leaks

*The Watergate reporting of Bob Woodward (below, right) and Carl Bernstein of The Washington Post pointed journalism toward a task never before undertaken: indicting a president. The Post got onto the story in the summer of 1972; Senate hearings began a year later; Nixon (right) resigned in August 1974. Soon thereafter, adversary journalism came under sharp fire from conservatives.*



Ken Fells/The Washington Post

of a case developed by government investigators, it is clear from their own durable account, *All the President's Men*, that Woodstein in fact worked very hard to assemble facts that government did not want assembled.

Moreover, they and their editors presented Watergate in the only mode that could have survived the hostile scrutiny of the White House and won serious attention in the long run from an indifferent public — the neutral-sounding journalese of the investigative reporter. The major break came on October 10, 1972, with a story that announced that "the Watergate bugging incident stemmed from a massive campaign of political spying and sabotage conducted on behalf of President Nixon's reelection and directed by officials of the White House and the Committee for the Re-Election of the President. . . ." This even Epstein conceded to be investigative reporting.

For a time the dam held, and then Watergate exposures tumbled forth as other national media sought to catch up with the *Post*: Seymour Hersh's disclosure in the *Times* on January 14, 1973, of payments to the Watergate burglars; *Time's* revelation of the first "White House horror" — the wiretaps on journalists and officials in 1969 following disclosure of the secret bombing of Cambodia; the stories in

*Newsweek* in May 1973 on the damaging information emanating from the White House insider and informant, John Dean. In addition, the networks, notably NBC, undertook investigations that contributed to the resignation of Agnew. Finally, starting in May 1973, the Senate hearings began — and, as Timothy Crouse remarked in *Rolling Stone*, “put the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval on the scandal, made it credible, and largely took over the investigation from the always-suspect press.” The process of toppling the Nixon administration took about a year thereafter.

What had journalists wrought? Had they in effect killed the king? Some, such as the professional maverick Nicholas von Hoffman, looked back and found Watergate the nadir of press performance: “It wasn’t journalism; it was lynching. Not only were the pretentious canons of the trade chucked overboard; so were fairness and common sense.”

The only turn of events that could be called a mob action was another consensus of the kind that had moved press opinion on McCarthy and Tet. The consensus on Nixon appeared after the “Saturday-night massacre” (the firing of special prosecutor Archibald Cox and the resignation of his superiors) on October 20, 1973, when major newspapers and national magazines, as well as network commentators, began to call, almost in unison, for Nixon’s resignation.

But the charge of lynching is more commonly applied to the behavior of reporters. Certainly there was deep antagonism toward Nixon, and it cropped up repeatedly during his late news conferences. But, as in Vietnam, what was actually published stood up well against the historical record; the repeated threats of the administration to take libel action did not materialize, and it was the White House, not the press, that chronically had to correct the record. If an adversary journalism was to exist in America, if only for a moment, this had been the right moment.

## Attack from the right

**E**ven secure in the knowledge of having been mostly right, the press felt a chill. The problem was not revanchism; there seemed to be no impulse to punish the press for bringing down Nixon. But a longer-term trend was running by the mid-1970s, a flow of comment that pictured modern journalism as a usurper — much more visible than in the past, more powerful, and somehow alien. Although a certain amount of this criticism was aimed at the institutions of the press — notably the New York and Washington newspapers, the networks, and the newsmagazines — most was directed at journalists themselves. Journalists, it was alleged, were out of control and out of line with dominant social values; they had come to constitute a separate and subversive class. The effort to bring them back under control proceeded on three fronts:

that of the external, largely conservative, critique; that of management-oriented public relations; and that of internal restrictions.

The conservative critique had begun to form long before Watergate. Edith Efron’s *The News Twisters* (1971) became a bible for those who believed that television news carried an indelible liberal bias. Agnew added the idea that journalists exercised illegitimate political power. In 1971, Daniel P. Moynihan, then a subcabinet official in the Nixon administration, elaborated in *Commentary* an already commonplace idea that journalists now made up an elite drawn, he proposed metaphorically, from the *Harvard Crimson* and the *Columbia Daily Spectator*. They were, he charged, the charter members of the adversary culture, devoting their careers to promoting “attitudes genuinely hostile to American society and American government.” Although the details of such a proposition tended to collapse under scrutiny, it had at least the germ of support in the fact that journalists had come to talk a good game about themselves as professionals; and a profession is, by definition, an elite.

Such critics as Irving Kristol focused on what they saw as the derangement of journalism’s relationship with government. Writing in 1975, Kristol bemoaned the loss of deference, “the single most significant change that has occurred in journalism in our lifetime.” He complained: “Not only do journalists no longer concede the government any prior claim to defining the news, they do not see government as having any right at all to have its point of view fully and fairly presented. . . . Instead, journalists today insist that *their* point of view is what defines ‘the news.’” This was accurate enough; the question was whether it was a fault.

The most incisive of these analyses was the one that Paul H. Weaver wrote for the spring 1974 issue of *The Public Interest*. He attacked persistently adversary journalism as a kind of heresy posing as a tradition. At its extreme, Weaver contended, the movement placed journalists’ rights — notably confidentiality — above the law. Down the road he could see America rent by a Europeanized, politicized journalism; he urged journalists to return to the ways of objective cohabitation with government.

Weaver and others portrayed this apparent change in the operating basis of journalism as alarming; but the more alarming possibility was that the basic change had been in the opposite direction. Ben H. Bagdikian, successor as national press critic to Liebling, raked over coverage of the 1972 campaign and found that, in effect, Agnewism had triumphed. Far from being adversarial, the behavior of most news organizations had represented “a tragic time of reversal of the lessons of the 1950s and 1960s,” which had “moved the American news system closer to becoming a propaganda arm of the administration in power.” Joseph P. Lyford, writing at about the same time, presented the case even more forcefully:

. . . the Cold War and Vietnam have institutionalized a system for the massive production by private and public bureaucracies of something that might be called “supernews” — the type of news that results from a mixing of censorship, propaganda, and “public information.”

Journalists, Lyford maintained, had but puny power to counter the voice of the Executive. To those who pointed to the Watergate controversy as a contradiction of his thesis of "a growing symbiosis" between government and the press, Lyford responded: "What most of the news media want is a return to the days when things went smoothly."

## The managers regroup

Lyford was on target. Nixon had hardly left the White House when journalism's own managers — led by *The Washington Post's* publisher, Katharine Graham — suggested that a period of less aggressiveness was in order. The managerial network had already set in motion public-relations measures designed to temper the conservative critique and to reduce public anxiety about journalism. Inevitably, these measures took the form of controlling, or seeming to control, the activities of employees.

On the macro level, a national press council took shape, fertilized by the example of the British press council and recommended by the Hutchins Commission in 1947. A consortium sponsored by the Twentieth Century Fund issued a prospectus in November 1972 and the National News Council — an unofficial, quasi-judicial body devoted to receiving, investigating, and opining on complaints — began to function in the following year.

From the start, the council had to struggle. It was chronically short of funds, even after it began to accept contributions from the organizations it was monitoring. A key newspaper, *The New York Times*, denounced the council as a backdoor opening to government controls. The journalism review *More* fixed on it as a basically managerial solution and thus antithetical to its program of reform. (By contrast, the *Columbia Journalism Review* published reports of council decisions for four years.) In the end, the council persisted for eleven years. After its demise, its unrealized possibilities were paid a kind of tribute by General William C. Westmoreland, who said after his protracted libel battle with CBS that such disputes ought to be resolved in some kind of news council; he had apparently never heard of the one that was in existence when he sued.

The same technique of handling complaints microscopically was transferred to the local level by creation of the newspaper ombudsman or reader representative. The concept was first floated by A. H. Raskin in *The New York Times* (which has itself always shunned an ombudsman like poison) and was first adopted, in Louisville, in 1967.

The essentially managerial character of the ombudsman was not always clear in the public-relations fluff that portrayed the individual (usually a senior journalist in the organization) as an independent representative of the public

interest. Ben Bagdikian's struggle with the position at *The Washington Post* made this clearer. Bagdikian raised hackles with his first column, which dealt with the "Metro Seven" — black reporters at the *Post* who demanded reform of the newspaper's hiring and promotion systems. Then, in a panel at Harvard on April 6, 1972, he said something that the executive editor, Bradlee, interpreted as favoring a black boycott of the *Post*, and there was an angry parting of the ways. The *Post*, however, continued to be the leading exponent of ombudsmanship, and over the years it was joined by as many as three dozen like-minded newspapers.

In the same era, journalism's interlocking public-relations directorate raised the unassailable banner of ethics to keep journalists from stirring up unfavorable publicity. Three major national organizations — the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Associated Press Managing Editors, and Sigma Delta Chi/Society of Professional Journalists — all rewrote their codes of principles between 1973 and 1975, each implicitly condemning misbehavior by individual journalists, but offering not a word on individual journalists' rights, inside the organization or out.

Codes at particular news organizations were cut from the same pattern, but with more specificity. Employees were to refrain from any activity that might embarrass the employer, from political involvement to — and this indicated the changing status of journalists — investments that might create a conflict of interest. Moreover, management was to be the sole judge of propriety — a proposition upheld in a National Labor Relations Board decision in 1975. Diane Woodstock, president of a Guild local in Wisconsin, stated correctly that the issue was "the power of the management to control the staff versus the power of the staff to control its work and its privacy." The management position was stated, with unintended bluntness, in a National News Council report asserting that under such codes reporters "are not forfeiting their rights; they are temporarily suspending the exercise of some of them."

Although such codes did not directly restrict the newsroom-democracy campaign, they were a symptom of reasserted managerial control. In that light, the reporter-power movement began to look less like a revolution than a last stand against bureaucratization, accelerated in these years by the widespread adoption of the perfect bureaucratic tool, the newsroom computer — a system permitting not only easier tracking of work product and worker, but also the shifting of technical, clerical, and production functions onto journalists. Only a year after the buoyant 1972 counter-convention, *More* found that the reform movement had lost momentum — that the "redistribution of power seems to spook those who ought to be most interested in it"; two years later, it conceded that most journalists "accept management control as a given." Reporter power became the concern of a minority, or rather of a minority of the concerned minority.

Rank-and-file disenchantment may have risen in part from a realization that reporter power might not mean much more democracy. A Harvard specialist in organizational behavior, Chris Argyris, gained access to *The New York Times* for a time in the early 1970s, during the efflorescence there of



reporter-power activity. The *Times* news operation, Argyris noted (in *Behind the Front Page*, 1974), was already run by former reporters; those who wanted to gain power were much like those already in power — “authoritarian, individualistic, and competitive.”

Moreover, there was a disconcerting note of social concern in the reporter-power platform. Peter Dreier, who studied the Chicago reporter-power movement, attributed its collapse in part to its failure to develop bases in the community. Indeed, some journalists came to regard the public as enemy number one, their chief responsibility being to live up to the expectations of their peers and the abstractions of their profession. “Professionals,” James Carey remarked in 1978, “are privileged to live in a morally less ambiguous universe than the rest of us.”

## Order restored

It is impossible to tell when a whiff of Pulitzer Prize began to waft through *The Washington Post* in connection with Janet Cooke's story about an eight-year-old black heroin addict — no later, certainly, than the time it was published on September 28, 1980, under the headline JIMMY'S WORLD. In the account later offered by the *Post* ombudsman, it is clear that in the process that permitted the fabrication, Cooke, a neophyte reporter, was less important than her powerful organizational sponsors. The attacks by Washington officials on the story and the *Post*'s indignant defense of its right to conceal its sources seemed only to enhance the story's prize value. It was soon shipped off to the Pulitzer factory, where its quasi-realism, luminous detail, and implied sense of moral concern struck the jury and the advisory board as representing the very best in journalism (and, of course, it arrived under the best of aegis, that of the heroes of Watergate). On April 13, 1981, it received a Pulitzer. Within two days, anomalies appeared, first in Janet Cooke's résumé, then in the story itself, and the *Post* was compelled to return the prize.

Almost at once it became clear that the significance of the matter within the journalism community extended far beyond the circumstances that it involved the Pulitzer Prizes and *The Washington Post*, although these certainly gave it initial prominence. The incident mobilized the whole journalistic counterreformation, for it crystallized among those whom the critic David Eason has dubbed the “conventionalists” everything that had gone awry in journalism over the previous two decades. Eason wrote: “The predominant thrust of this commentary — so predominant that few alternative conceptualizations were published — was that journalism had lost its way in the 1960s and 70s and that it needed to turn away from these new practices and recon-

nect with the better traditions of its history.” In short, these commentators were ready to evoke an imagined past of tough-minded (and dead) city editors as a replacement for the uncomfortable present — somebody along the lines, say, of Walter Burns of *The Front Page*.

Editors even tried to put this romantic notion into practice. There was for a time a hot pursuit of news-fakers, and *The New York Times*, the *New York Daily News*, and the AP each had its petty embarrassment. A poll conducted a year later for the ASNE revealed that editors on nearly 30 percent of the responding newspapers claimed to have tightened controls on reporters — mostly over use of anonymous sources — as a result of the episode. Tellingly, four out of five respondents still said they considered it important for their newspaper to compete for prizes.

Yet it has long been clear that unwritten newsroom policies are more important than the written, and the unwritten rules that were in effect by 1982 mocked the notion that journalism could turn the clock back to an imaginary time. Stephen Hess, in *The Washington Reporters* (1981), observed that real-life editors, “not caring very much, not knowing very much, being too busy, deferring to experts, wanting to retain morale,” exerted little control over the output of reporters.

At first glance, such an analysis might have made it sound as if reporter power had triumphed in the long run, that reporters at last had the autonomy envisioned in the 1970s. Yet any working reporter knew instinctively that it was not true. Certainly, as Hess observed, most stories were developed on reporter initiative and were left largely intact on the way to publication, but there were still rules guiding the work. A reporter still knew that a news story demanded a certain approach and political placement. Any major violation would, of course, result in nonpublication and eventually, perhaps, in nonemployment.

How could reporters be free and confined at the same time? One student of the problem, John Soloski of the University of Iowa, has concluded that the standards of professionalism, which were the symbols of rebellion in the 1950s, have been transmuted into a system of control: “The value of news professionalism for the news organization is that it establishes norms of conduct making it unnecessary for the news organization to arbitrarily establish elaborate rules and regulations for news staffers.” What had once been the reporters' weapon against the parochialism of the organization had become the organization's weapon against their autonomy.

This was indeed a balance point in the equilibrium that returned to newsrooms after the disruptions of the 1970s. Hess saw it as a specific bargain: although reporters have less supervisory authority than employees of comparable rank in other fields, they have the quasi-professional prerogative of not having specific managerial judgments imposed on their work. He hardly needed to add that they also have careers in a sense not known to previous journalistic generations — salaries extending at the major institutions toward the upper reaches of five figures (and well beyond in television), as well as the comforts of professional prestige and social status. “This is a trade-off,” Hess wrote,



"that seems to satisfy both management and labor."\*

This truce also embodies a condition of near-stability in the composition of the news staff. Despite the affirmative-action lawsuits that once threatened to force change, and even the sharing of authority, the hiring and promotion of women and minorities has remained at a level that poses little challenge to the dominant culture of the newsroom (with a few exceptions, such as the Gannett Company, which carries out its affirmative-action programs with a corporate thoroughness worthy of the country's biggest newspaper publisher). Authority is shared, not primarily with those who first defined themselves as discriminated against, but with those successors among women and minority journalists who are willing to accept the terms of those now in charge.

In the historical setting, this new stability can be seen as the result of the long transition of the newsroom from a quasi-industrial shop, with direct and arbitrary controls, to the invisible controls of a mature bureaucracy, more enlightened than the restrictions that Breed depicted but, in the end, equally protective of the stability of the institution. Such stability plays an important role in fitting otherwise anomalous news operations into the diffuse conglomerates that have become their economic base. Corporate managements need not tinker with a news operation so long as it sells papers and attracts advertisers; news is simply a consumer product of certifiable quality.

## The new age of deference

There remained at the end of the 1970s one more major item on the agenda of journalism — to reach some kind of new understanding with power. A specific call for a truce came in May 1982 from Michael J. O'Neill of the *New York Daily News*, who spoke as the retiring president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. "We should make peace with the government," he said. "We should not be its enemy. . . . We are supposed to be the observers, not the participants — the neutral party, not the permanent political opposition." He added: "We should cure ourselves of our adversarial mindset. The adversarial culture is a disease attacking the nation's vital organs." Disavowing, as it did by implication, what many in journalism considered its major achievements of the previous twenty years, this proposition hardly met universal approval. Benjamin Bradlee of *The Washington Post*, for one, responded that making such a peace with the gov-

ernment was "a pact with the devil." Yet O'Neill's speech had wide appeal, proposing as it did a return to deference and release from the stresses of being a watchdog.

In fact, a truce with government was already setting in, but not necessarily on the cozy terms that O'Neill envisioned. Neither side really acknowledged the arrangement, for the national press still lived by the slogans of adversariality, and the government still complained regularly about press irresponsibility.

But government appeared at last to realize that it did not need to engage in the paranoid feuding of the Johnson and Nixon periods, and there have been no further grand confrontations of the type of the Pentagon Papers or Watergate. For its part, the press no longer automatically lines up against government pleas for secrecy. When in 1979 Carter's Justice Department tried to suppress an article about the technology of the H-bomb in *The Progressive* magazine, *The Washington Post* advised *The Progressive* to back down, since no major social interest was involved.

Moreover, press behavior has become more cautious politically. One telling incident occurred in 1982, when *The New York Times* again had a foreign correspondent in hot water — this time Raymond Bonner, for his coverage of a village massacre in El Salvador by government forces. The assault on Bonner (and on Alma Guillermoprieto of *The Washington Post*) was couched in familiar terms: a long editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* ranged through the roster of the deluded and disloyal, starting with John Reed and working through Herbert Matthews and David Halberstam (Halberstam, being alive, defended himself ably), Janet Cooke, and finally Bonner. Accuracy in Media (the long-lived scourge of the liberal press) joined in by saying that Bonner was part of a "propaganda war favoring the Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador." Six months later, the *Times* withdrew Bonner, suggesting that he had had insufficient experience, and he soon left the newspaper. Before long, the paper hired — not exactly as a replacement — Shirley Christian of *The Miami Herald*, who had criticized as dupes the reporters who had covered the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and was publishing an anti-Sandinista book. Curiously, where Bonner's politicization had pointed him toward an exit, Christian's had not hurt her at all.

This sequence may have said less about the *Times* specifically — although it certainly said something — than about the increasingly restricted political setting in which all the national press was operating. Starting with the seizure of the Teheran embassy late in 1979 and the Russian occupation of Afghanistan the press had both reported and joined what George Kennan called the greatest "militarization of thought and discourse" since World War II. Roger Morris wrote in 1980: "American opinion this winter bristled with a strident, frustrated chauvinism — and, from sea to shining sea, American journalism bristled with it." In such episodes and in repeated international terrorist incidents, the press, led by television, played the patriot, obsessively focusing on crisis and suggesting that America, not individuals, had been held hostage. At the same time, the press thus cannily painted itself as being as loyalist as the jingo in the street.

\* Conditions in many smaller organizations, it must be noted, have not risen far above the level of the 1950s. Employers hold salaries down to secretarial levels and gouge employees by denying them overtime pay or by using their services on an hourly basis without making them employees, thus denying them benefits.

Grenada brought home to journalists their new impotence. An invasion in 1983 of a puny antagonist, on grounds at least partly fabricated, was widely accepted as a major American victory. The press chose to complain less about the flaws in policy than about the Pentagon's refusal to let reporters ride in with the troops, and was rebuked by public indifference to its pleas. There followed self-examination and vows to take new steps to restore "credibility" — journalism's public-relations term of last resort.

Grenada was a clinching instance in the rise and triumph of "supernews" — the concept invented a decade before by Joseph Lyford but now carried to Orwellian lengths that he had perhaps not envisioned. The supernews of the Reagan era — that is, the official voice that renders all countering voices impotent — has been augmented by three characteristics. First, it has little competition from within government, for the administration has done its best, by legal action and retaliation, to shut off the important flow of information that is trivializingly called "leaks." Second, and more important, the official voice is now so persistent that it outlasts non-Executive voices, including the only occasionally adversarial voice of the press. Finally, supernews is so dominant and clear that it seems always to be saying much more than it actually tells — for example, claims of success in the raid on Libya in the spring of 1986 were made before Washington could have known the actual results.

The standard that provided incentive for coverage of Vietnam and Watergate, that of journalism that could stand the test of history, has been placed in jeopardy by supernews. In Central America, American journalists have exposed serious shortcomings in American policies and clients, but over the years the government has successfully overcome such details and has won its main points, to the extent that by 1986 official premises — that, for example, a government in Central America constitutes a major security threat to the United States — underlay many news stories. Such as

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● *Neither side acknowledged the arrangement, but a truce with government was setting in.* ●

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sumptions were effectively tested by reporting from Vietnam; in the case of Central America, by contrast, supernews has made it possible for official policy to triumph over mere fact.

Neither journalists nor their critics would necessarily agree that the journalism of 1986 is at a dead end. After all, in comparison with their status in the 1950s, journalists are immensely more visible, more endowed with the trappings of power, more secure in status and economic expectations. They can view this current period, if they so choose, as one of healthy consolidation for themselves and their institutions, the inevitable sequel to insurgency.

Moreover, they can argue, the present arrangements may

be merely a pause, while the generation that first took over in the 1960s, its managers now contemplating retirement, tidies up its work. At last report, Homer Bigart, approaching eighty, was living as a gentleman in retirement in New Hampshire; and even the Young Turk, David Halberstam, has passed fifty. The group of new managers that came in early in the 1960s — of which A. M. Rosenthal has been the most eminent — have been stepping down one by one.

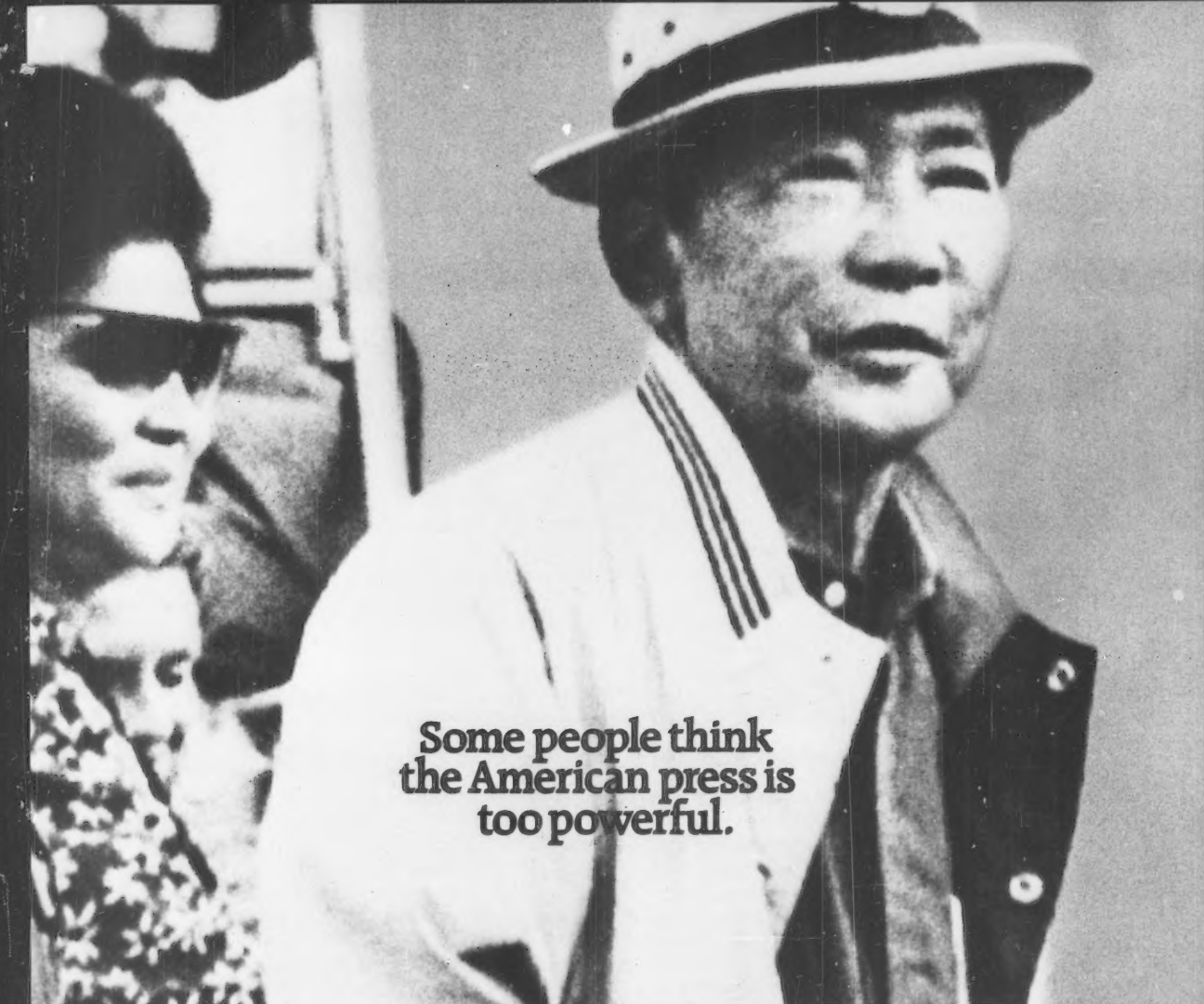
Similarly, the shaking-out of news institutions that has proceeded in the background in these past decades can be looked on as a kind of corporate rationalization of the field. Certainly it has left behind much-mourned institutions — the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Washington Star*, the *Chicago Daily News*, the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, to name a few. (It has erected few new ones — Gannett's *U.S.A. Today* is the only major new newspaper — in their place.) The three wire services of the 1950s have been reduced to two, or, arguably, one and a half; the three networks have been augmented only by a scrawny public broadcasting arm and a cable news service. The three newsmagazines are just the same titles as thirty years ago. What has changed is that each of these institutions (except the AP and public broadcasting) and almost every major newspaper is now part of a larger corporate structure, itself a bureaucracy in a society in which bureaucracies are the major institutions.

This once-insurgent generation can begin now to look back and contemplate how well it has fared in the struggle that Walter Lippmann predicted more than two decades ago: "the unending conflicts between [the] duty to seek the truth and [the] human desire to get on in the world." Many journalists (and journalistic institutions), if they are in a self-congratulatory mood, can say plausibly that they have both sought truth and gotten on, and that in fact getting on has enabled them to seek the truth more freely. Yet at the same time they may have lost that quintessential sense of being outside, of being below the salt, that made them at least intermittently effective critics of society and polity. And they have certainly yet to demonstrate that they are immune, in Lippmann's words, to "the most important forms of corruption in the modern journalist's world . . . the many guises and disguises of social climbing on the pyramids of power." ■

Susan Meiselas/Magnum



*The press's new cautiousness was reflected when The New York Times recalled Raymond Bonner, shown here at a massacre site, from El Salvador after his coverage became controversial.*



**Some people think  
the American press is  
too powerful.**

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Ferdinand Marcos, for one.

For 20 years, rumors circulated that the Marcoses and their friends were stashing away a fortune overseas.

But the public had no proof.

Reporter Lewis Simons of the San Jose Mercury News had made several trips to the country dominated by Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos. Conversations, he recalled, "often led to comments like - you know she owns such-and-such. And he owns so-and-so."

Simons wanted to find out how much of this was fact, and how much was fiction.

He plugged into every rumor pipeline in the Philippines. Weeks turned into months. Eventually, he sent back a massive file.

San Jose Mercury News reporters Pete Carey and Katherine Ellison took over. They sifted through thousands of pages of legal documents from California to New York.

On July 23, 1985 they broke the story. It documented how the Marcoses and eight associates were "systematically draining vast amounts of wealth from their nation and hiding it overseas." They owned banks, condominiums, office buildings, mansions and other properties in the U.S. and Europe. They had spent \$10 billion since 1979.

The stories created a political tidal wave.

There were calls for impeachment. Marcos promised early elections.

The rest, really, is history. Corazon Aquino is the new Philippine president.

Pete Carey, Katherine Ellison and Lewis Simons won the 1986 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting.

The whole project was a gigantic effort. A year of research, reporting and writing. Of probing elusive off-shore holding companies and dummy corporations. Then, staying with the follow-up.

Most papers, regardless of size, wouldn't have invested that kind of effort on a story 7,200 miles away.

But the San Jose Mercury News is a Knight-Ridder newspaper.



**KNIGHT-RIDDER**

We never underestimate the American people.

Knight-Ridder, winner of an unprecedented seven Pulitzer Prizes in 1986, is a nationwide communications company with eight television stations, cable systems, business information services and 28 daily newspapers.

# THEN & NOW

Number of weeks when *Time* and *Newsweek* had identical cover subjects ♦ 1961: 4 ♦ 1985: 16

Minority employees (black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian) in newspaper newsrooms  
♦ 1968: 400 ♦ 1986: 3,400

Percentage of total circulation, U.S. dailies, represented by chain-owned papers  
♦ 1960: 46.1 ♦ 1985: 77

Combined pre-tax profits of the three major networks ♦ 1961: \$267,960,000\* ♦ 1985: \$1,034,600,000

Women on the mastheads of the five largest-circulation U.S. dailies ♦ 1961: 0 ♦ 1986: 11

Women network news correspondents (three major networks) ♦ 1961: 3 ♦ 1986: 54

Average trial-court award in libel cases  
♦ 1961: \$214,480\* ♦ 1985: \$1,395,080

Number of VDTs in newspaper newsrooms  
♦ 1970: 23 ♦ 1986: 60,000

Annual budget, CBS News ♦ 1961: \$75 million\* ♦ 1986: \$250 million

Number of daily papers in U.S. ♦ 1961: 1,761 ♦ 1985: 1,676

Total circulation of daily papers in U.S. ♦ 1961: 59,261,000 ♦ 1985: 62,766,232

Total revenues, U.S. newspapers ♦ 1961: \$12.7 billion\* ♦ 1985: \$25.5 billion

Number of papers carrying William Buckley's column ♦ 1962: 41 ♦ 1986: 300-plus

Number of pages in pre-Mother's Day issue of *Sunday New York Times*  
♦ 1961: 578 ♦ 1986: 722

Number of papers with Newspaper Guild contracts  
♦ 1961: 180 ♦ 1986: 144

Membership of Newspaper Guild ♦ 1961: 31,262 ♦ 1986: 33,195

Number of unattributed quotes in an issue of *The Washington Post*  
♦ 1961 (July 26): 36 ♦ 1986 (July 30): 106

Number of households with cable ♦ 1961: 725,000 ♦ 1985: 34,740,300

Households with TV ♦ 1961: 47,200,000 ♦ 1985: 85,900,000

Students enrolled in undergraduate journalism programs ♦ 1960: 10,349 ♦ 1985: 82,766

Journalism graduates taking jobs in public relations ♦ 1964: 192 ♦ 1985: 2,407

Top fees for journalists on the lecture circuit ♦ 1961: \$7,500\* to \$11,000\* ♦ 1986: \$15,000 to \$18,000

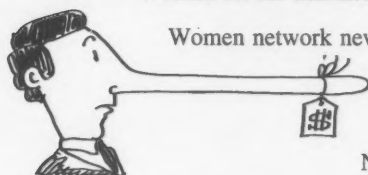
References to "Journalistic Ethics" in *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*  
♦ 1961: 0 ♦ 1985: 23

Average salary, anchorperson, top-25 market ♦ 1961: \$40,580\* ♦ 1986: \$115,860

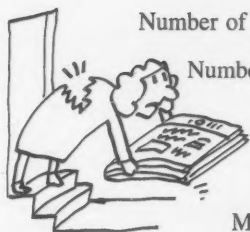
Average salary, TV news "star," top-25 market  
♦ 1961: \$272,000 to \$363,000\* ♦ 1986: \$800,000 to \$2,500,000

Average beginning salary of a newspaper reporter ♦ 1961: \$15,500\* ♦ 1986: \$16,900

\* In 1986 dollars



CJR/Stuart Goldenberg



1961



1986



**MOLLIE PARNIS LIVINGSTON**  
Chairman  
Mollie Parnis Livingston Foundation

**KEN AULETTA**  
Writer  
*New Yorker*  
Columnist  
*New York Daily News*

**DAVID BRINKLEY**  
Correspondent  
ABC News

**JOHN CHANCELLOR**  
Commentator  
ABC News

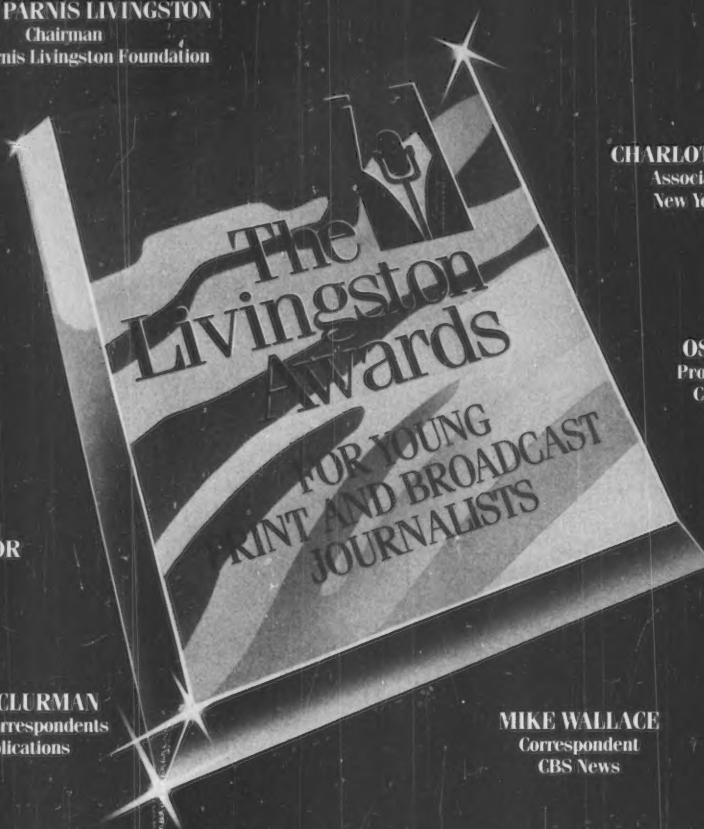
**RICHARD M. CLURMAN**  
Former Chief of Correspondents  
Time-Life Publications

**CHARLOTTE CURTIS**  
Associate Editor  
*New York Times*

**OSBORN ELLIOTT**  
Professor of Journalism  
Columbia University

**GENE ROBERTS**  
Executive Editor  
*Philadelphia Inquirer*

**MIKE WALLACE**  
Correspondent  
CBS News



# THREE \$5,000 PRIZES

will be given by the Mollie Parnis Livingston Foundation for the best 1986 print or broadcast coverage of local, national and international news by journalists aged 34 and younger in any U.S. medium.

**PURPOSE:** To recognize and further develop the abilities of young journalists.

The  
Livingston  
Awards



**PROCEDURE:** All entries will be judged on the basis of a single report or, in the case of series, up to seven reports. Organizations may apply for individuals, or individuals may apply on their own. The deadline for 1986 entries is February 15, 1987. Application forms may be obtained from Charles R. Eisendrath, Executive Director, The Livingston Awards, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109. Telephone: (313) 764-0420.



# SEVEN VOICES

Journalists talk about  
their lives—and how the world  
in which they work  
has been transformed



FRANK DOUGHERTY  
reporter

REUVEN FRANK  
television producer

ROSALIE MULLER WRIGHT  
feature editor

DAVID BURNETT  
photojournalist

CONSTANT C. DEJOIE, JR.  
newspaper editor and publisher

LOREN JENKINS  
foreign correspondent

LADD HAMILTON  
editorial writer and columnist



## FRANK DOUGHERTY

Frank Dougherty is a longtime reporter for the Philadelphia Daily News.

I come from a family of river-ward Mick-eyes, and their expectation was that I would do what my uncles did or what my father did — go into the crafts or trades. I didn't want to go into the trades, I didn't just want to hear the world in monaural sound. So I went to advertising school for a year and then applied to the *Daily News*.

My first day at the *Daily News* was June 25, 1961. I was nineteen years old. Copy boys then, you would just sit on a bench and run copy. The bench was right next to the copy desk and John Praksta, who's still here today, would just yell out "Boy" and you would jump up from this bench and you had to run over and pick up the piece of copy and run it out to the composing room and have it set. I was one of the last of the apprentices in the business. The idea was that if you were quick enough on your feet and would respond quickly you'd probably be quick on the street.

I also had to strip the wires. Every two or three minutes there would be a buzzer in the newsroom and you'd strip off the story and give it to the editor. If the paper was hanging out the back of the printer, you would be out of a job. I feel like I'm talking about the Middle Ages. People still did yell, "Stop the presses, we've got to replate the front page."

Other things I did was run stuff to bookies — I would take bets out to a guy in the composing

room, Lou something — and mix drinks, back in the photo lab usually. These were still the newspaper people of the Hollywood films. They had a pint in their pocket, a hole in their shoe, and they were making \$37.50 a week, actually a little better. I started at \$43.70 a week. The whiskey would be in their desk, they'd pour booze in their coffee. Some of the older reporters would work drunk. One, we used to have to go out and get milk and cut his whiskey in the back so he could write his column.

Newspaper people really lived up to their image. I think it was the fast-lane kind of living, and part of the romanticism of the business was reporters are supposed to drink a lot. And in the police pressroom, the city hall pressroom, there were always these overstuffed chairs where people could kind of sleep off a load.

This was the old *Daily News*, and the expression was booze, cooze, and the *Daily News*. I don't believe cooze is a word, it means [mouths something]. That's what it means. The old newsrooms were pretty much like locker rooms. Newspaper reporters did not really have a lot of respect when I came into the business. It isn't that people looked down upon them, but the job did not have the status that it has today. This country was still in the fifties really. We had stand-up telephones.

I remember the editor, J. Ray Hunt. He was an anachronistic individual, he really was out of the thirties, he was "Stop the presses." Hunt worked like sixteen hours a day and he would actually clear a little spot on top of his desk and get a bundle of newspapers and take a nap. The copy boy would have to go in and wake him up. His whole life was newspapers. The only thing he cared about was his wife, newspapers, and the Catholic church.

One of my jobs was to ride Ray Hunt home, because he worked such long hours that he was too tired to walk. As soon as you'd get in the car he'd shut his eyes. The car was a black 1958 Chevy with a *Daily News* logo and a governor on the carburetor. It wouldn't go above twenty-five miles an hour. That was so the copyboys would not break it up. One night we came to the top of this little hill on Twenty-First Street and I applied the brakes and jerked the car just a little bit, and Hunt woke up and got this smile. At that point, looking out the windshield you'd see the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, and to the left you'd see the white tower of the *Inquirer*. And he said, "The cupola, Saints Peter and Paul. The *Inquirer* tower. My two gods." And I took him home.

He was a very religious guy but at the same time he liked the leg shots. We would do spicy stories, a lot of gangster stories, sassy headlines. When the editor gave a photographer an assignment, he would always say, "Get some leg into it." If there

CJ/Phil Cramer



was an accident on the expressway, you'd have to have a good-looking woman looking into the wreckage. She would be leg. Any kind of story I went out on, they'd always say, "Talk to the neighbors, but if there's a good-looking woman, talk to her and get her number so we can send a photographer out."

There might have been a tendency to shape news a little more than today. A lot of editors would tell you the questions to ask before you went out. And when you got out there and said, "These questions aren't relevant now that I have the facts," you would be told, "You better make them relevant."

For instance, I can remember Ray Hunt really liked stories about Main Line debutantes. We had a murder, a very, very wealthy family, and it was in Telford, P.A., which is in Bucks County. So we covered the story, and Ray Hunt had a headline, MAIN LINE MATRON SLAIN. And someone said to Hunt, "It's really not the Main Line, this is Telford, P.A." The Main Line got its name because the railroad people had the tracks on the Main Line railroad laid out so they'd be close to where they lived. Anyway, Hunt so much wanted a Main Line matron that he just said, "Telford's not the Main Line? Well, fuck it boys, we'll lay more track." Next day, MAIN LINE MATRON. There was an awful lot of that back then. Again, I feel like I'm talking about the Middle Ages.

**T**here was a Ray Hunt expression, "Put the speedball on it," meaning give it the tabloid approach, give it a catchy lead, take a twenty-inch story and make it nine inches, light, tight, and bright. They used those words here; they come out of the advertising industry. The biggest influence, no one was aware of it at the time, was television. It was defining a lot of the news.

Hunt gave me a job writing photo captions with kickers — a headline on a caption that newspapers don't do anymore. A woman would have triplets — THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE THREE. I did that for a year full-time. It was very hard work because you would look at a photograph and try to come up with something clever. I would just sit around all night. That's the hardest thing in this business, sitting around. Later, doing police work, you'd go out on a raid and sit around for hours until the suspect came in and they'd hit the place, break down the doors. Usually you'd sit in the police car.

Back then cops would ask, "Do you want to go out on a raid?" That would be unheard of today. But reporters were more like police back then. We dressed alike, talked alike. We'd more or less reinforce the city administration and the police administration. You didn't have the adversary relationship. You might have a big scandal in city hall,

but you would go after a couple of individuals as opposed to the way the system was conducted. In the old days, for example, a policeman took a payoff from a brothel or an after-hours place and got caught — that club owner would be a focus of the story and that policeman taking the envelope would be a focus of the story. That's a big change from today when we will expose how did this happen, how did it work, so you indict the system, you indict a way of doing business, a way of life.

When I was a police reporter, I got to know [Frank L.] Rizzo. He was commissioner. Personally, I liked him and I still do, but I don't think that Rizzo should have ever been the commissioner or the mayor, because I think basically this was a decent guy who did indecent things under the influence of power. But if you were a police reporter, Rizzo certainly did make it very easy for you to get a lot of information that normally you wouldn't have any apparatus to get on your own. Sure, life is a series of trade-offs, and as a result coverage tended to be noncritical of him.

Rizzo always said that he liked reporters and in his first year as mayor, in 1972, he probably hired fifteen to twenty reporters. He loved to take reporters, say, to Palumbo's [restaurant]; he'd come down to the pressroom and get a couple of police cars and say, "Come on, I'm going to buy everybody dinner." He took all the police reporters every Christmas to Bookbinder's. You'd have a big lunch and Rizzo would hold court. He'd always say, "You guys ever get tired of newspapering, you got a job with my administration."

Some of the deals that were made with public officials and police were incestuous, and the unspoken is always a part of that kind of deal, where Rizzo made things easier for you. And I don't mean just reporters, I mean editors and publishers. Walter Annenberg [then publisher of the *Philadelphia Daily News* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*] and Rizzo were great friends; Annenberg would ride around with him in Car One. And when Annenberg had parties, Philadelphia policemen would go in tuxedos as guards.

I think the attitudes started to change around 1970 when a kid was shot in West Philadelphia. It was a chase, a stolen car, a kid was running away, and the police killed him. But that change, of course, began when Annenberg sold the papers to Knight, later Knight-Ridder. It's one of the reasons that a lot of critical stuff about Rizzo did not develop till he was the mayor and in city hall.

When I arrived in '61, people at the newspaper were still outraged that they had to support Richard Nixon as opposed to John Kennedy, because Annenberg ordered it. And, of course, there was Annenberg's enemies list. One year he was very angry with the Seventy-Sixers, and for a time he did not

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**Reporters were more like police back then. We dressed alike, talked alike. We'd more or less reinforce the city administration and the police administration. You didn't have the adversary relationship.**





**People who are coming into the business today are much better educated, but they are what I call metric wrenches.**

publish pre-game stories or features on the [basketball] team. If they won, all he'd print was two paragraphs, a paragraph if they lost. I don't know what the problem he had with the 'Sixers was, but he had problems with Milton Shapp [a businessman running for governor]. You didn't put any positive news about Shapp in the paper, never what we call face powder for a candidate, where he goes down to the Italian market, say, and you have a picture of him eating provolone. It was policy, just like your work schedule was posted up on the bulletin board. Annenberg's enemies were legion.

I only saw Annenberg once. It was outside this building in about 1961, because I wanted to see Richard Nixon, who was coming to visit him. So I was outside and Nixon showed up, and I glimpsed Annenberg. That was the one and only time. Annenberg maintained an office on the twelfth floor, but he was rarely here. Take Sam McKeel [publisher of Philadelphia Newspapers, Inc.]. McKeel is a presence in the building, you see him in the building, he will occasionally send out newsletters to employees, he'll be in the in-house newspaper, the editors will say, "I have to go up to Sam's for a meeting." You didn't have that with Annenberg. I think there was a period where he only came into this building once in an entire year; they only had to open the suite once. Annenberg could have been selling cars. He didn't have any feeling for the business.

Today they're better newspapers. The newspapers in Philadelphia, hell, they're terrific. And when you look back at some of the garbage, not garbage maybe but the stuff that wasn't good or there was no hardball investigative reporting . . . As much as politicians steal today or you hear in Philadelphia, police corruption, this town, these characters *looted* Philadelphia, and the papers never did a whole lot. I'm going back twenty-five, even fifty years. It's a better-quality newspaper. But life is a series of trade-offs.

When I first came in, I think the reporters were much more individualistic and harder to typecast. The older reporters had kind of a varied life-style. It was a time when newspaper offices were open to people who knew what they *didn't* want to do but they weren't exactly clear what to focus on so they did a lot of different things and ended up as newspaper people. They read quite a bit and had wide general interests and were somewhat eclectic. Their portfolio was life experience, and they were for the most part self-educated people.

People who are coming into the business today are much better educated, but they are what I call metric wrenches. Let me explain it. "I'm a seventeen-millimeter wrench," which means, "I'm an environmental reporter." "I'm a thirty-six-millimeter wrench: I'm an education reporter and I also

cover the courts." When I came into the business, we were all what I call adjustable wrenches, where you could do just about anything. People coming into the business now, they can zero in on their beats much better or with more precision, but they're not adjustable wrenches.

And younger reporters today when they have social functions, or you look at their friendships, they always do things with people in the business. They don't have many friends who are outside the business, they don't know people who make water go through your pipes. One of the problems I have with SYJs — the Serious Young Journalists — is that I don't think they really savor the characters. They're very well-educated but they don't have the wisdom sometimes to appreciate a character for how this person — even if you're only going to interview this person for ten minutes — will enrich your life, give a little bit more dimension to what you do.

Because, no matter what the editors say, I think they do want conventional thinkers and they don't want people off-center anymore. "If we get rid of all this funny stuff, we could have someone there who is giving us more productivity, more product." And with characters they're not going to get the full forty hours a week or they're not going to get the full fifty hours a week or the full sixty hours a week. The people they're hiring respond more to corporate manipulation.

This place, now, they meet constantly, they have more meeting rooms, and there's the ten-o'clock meeting and the editorial-board meeting and the photo meeting. We become more of a corporation. It used to be a joke around here, "Sure beats working for the Insurance Company of North America." It was the last refuge, you were part of corporate structure but your job did not require you to play the role of corporate employee, and that's changing now.

**T**hat said, the people here let me what I call fly under the radar. My unofficial title is the nutty-putty editor. They have taken what I do best, and that is nonsense, and actually made it a beat. I'm the *Daily News* gorilla editor. I wrote an obit for Massa, the gorilla. I pointed out that Massa had lived the life of a monk, a life of contemplative introspection, no red meat, no alcohol, no sex, no gambling, lived alone on a diet of vegetables and fruit. And I'm the Phantom Rider, riding buses and trolleys incognito, taking notes in the crossword puzzle. Originally, the life of the column was estimated at six to nine months, because people would after a while get tired of reading about "The bus was late" or "The bus was dirty" — buses are always late in Philadelphia,

buses are always dirty. The column will be sixteen in October. That's because it was always the vignettes and life in the big city that intrigued me. I also do hardball stuff, investigating Nazis. I'm an adjustable wrench; I'll chase a bus, I'll chase a Nazi.

I've never been an editor. They put me on the city desk once for a day and I sent everybody home early and the editor came back in and said, "Why did you do that?" She was outraged. And I said, "Why bother to have power if you can't abuse it?" A lot of times what I do in the newsroom is what I do in life. One thing I really like to make people think is — I play the neighborhood card, I'm Frank

Dougherty, Irish Frank from the neighborhood, you know, he drinks beer from a bottle, this guy's not all that swift. And so I can continue at age forty-four basically to be the class clown.

You know, this is no bullshit, I love this paper the same way that you would love a woman. I do. It's always been true. I guess I found a home, and the truest definition of home is from Robert Frost's "The Death of the Hired Man": "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." In a sense, I was here, and it was here, and it had to take me in.

*Frank Dougherty was interviewed by Philip Weiss.*

## REUVEN FRANK

*Reuven Frank, who began his career at NBC in 1950, was president of the news division from 1968 to 1973 and again from 1982 to 1984. He is currently a documentary producer at NBC News.*

I started at the Newark Evening News in 1947. I was something called night city editor, which sounds very impressive. But night city editor at an afternoon paper is less important than night city editor at a morning paper. I was doing all right. I believe I was the first Jew who ever got any kind of step above the herd at the Newark News.

I had a classmate [at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism] named Gerald Green, who later became known as a novelist. Jerry got a job at International News Service. In '49 or '50, I guess, he was offered a job at NBC Television. There was a little coterie at school, six or eight of us who used to get together from time to time, even as we went our separate ways. We used to make fun of Jerry because he had gotten into this thing called television. At that time I didn't even have a set. Television was something you watched baseball on in bars. I had no interest in it.

In the summer of '50, Jerry called me and said, "There's a job up here at NBC. Are you interested?" I said no and he got very angry at me, claiming that I was being rude and was slighting him and all that. Since I worked a night schedule and had nothing to do during the day, he said, the least I could do was come up there and have a look. That seemed reasonable, so I did.

In those days, NBC Television News was totally separate from NBC Radio News. The offices were at 106th Street and Park Avenue. The building is still there. I don't know who owns it now but it used to be the Pathé labs. NBC put the TV news up there to be near the lab because that is where you got the film developed. There were two or

three floors for television news and they had a couple of studios, one for local news and one for network news. But they also had a drama studio in the building. *Armstrong Circle Theater*, one of the great pillars of TV's Golden Age, came out of there.

So I went up there and Green showed me around. I remember the offices were on the eleventh floor. We wandered down to the fifth floor and went into a room that looked to me like a movie theater. There was a desk arrangement with seats behind it. In front of it were rows of seats like in a movie theater, maybe a hundred to a hundred and fifty — all empty. In the back were two or three people.



CJR/Harvey Wang

**Television was something you watched baseball on in bars. I had no interest in it.**



**Now the anchors have taken over. When the star needs a producer he or she calls the bullpen and the producer comes out in a little golf cart...Some anchors and producers trust each other. Some hate each other.**

Some negative film was rolling on the screen. Jerry said, "This is a screening room." If I looked at the screen carefully, I could make out what was happening in Germany or wherever the film came from. Some guy was saying, "Okay, we want five seconds of that and then we want to move this there." I thought, boy, that's about the best thing in the world! It was great stuff.

I remember asking the guy in charge at NBC how much he paid. He said a hundred dollars a week. And I said, "I'm already getting a hundred dollars." He said, "Okay, we'll give you a hundred and ten." I was lying. I had only been getting ninety.

A couple of weeks after I was reasonably secure in my employment, I remember talking to this same guy, whose name was Arthur Lodge. I said, "Arthur, NBC is a big, worldwide news organization, but when you needed another news writer you took me essentially off the street. All you knew about me was that I was a friend of Jerry Green." And he said, "Well, yeah, but the guys who are any good in radio won't come up here because they don't think it's gonna last." That was in August 1950.

The following March, the guy who was writing the show, the [John Cameron] Swayze program, which was called *The Camel News Caravan*, was called into the service in Korea. I took over, wrote that show for three years, got bored, did a little of this and a little of that, and ultimately became a producer.

*The Huntley-Brinkley Report* started on October 29, 1956. It was the second week of the Hungarian rebellion, the end of the second Stevenson-Eisenhower campaign, and the day that the Israelis decided to attack Suez. Nevertheless, it was probably the worst television news program in the history of the medium. Nothing worked. We had nothing to show.

The ratings were terrible for almost a year. The sales were very bad. In those days, when you didn't sell a commercial they aired Smokey the Bear or some other public-service announcement — unlike today, where the networks have a real Adam Smith-type operation going. If they don't sell a commercial at their rate-card rate, they will drop the price until they find a buyer.

I believe that for most of the summer of 1957 we did not have one commercial spot on that show. It was dead. Chet, David, and I used to talk about it. And what we decided was that we weren't going to do anything about it. Granted, there was a certain amount of learning to be done, but we were doing the show the way we wanted to do it. It was not a matter of celebrity. We never thought of it in those terms. God knows, they weren't stars then.

To this day I do not know why the program

wasn't cancelled. I assume it is because the network managers couldn't think of anything to replace it with. It wasn't an entertainment program. They couldn't just get rid of it. They had an obligation, a mandate, to do that type of programming and, if it was being done unsatisfactorily, they had to find another way of doing it. But they couldn't just turn it off.

For some reason or other, somebody at Texaco, probably the chairman, one of the old founding brigands named Augustus Calvin Long, took a liking to the show and he bought it — all of it. That helped raise our profile and more stations began to carry the show. The Westinghouse stations, for example, wouldn't clear us until Texaco came on.

After that, *Huntley-Brinkley* really started to catch on. The sign-off — "Good night, David" "Good night, Chet" — became part of the language. And in the fall of 1957, when Jack Chancellor was the only television reporter in Little Rock, we really started to become famous for news.

**W**hen *Huntley-Brinkley* went from fifteen minutes to a half hour [in 1963], I wrote a long memo that has been quoted a lot. The only point that I hoped would stick in people's minds was that television does not transmit information competently. It transmits experience.

But after a while the word people took over and television no longer exists in television news. When it appears, it is by accident. When I was working in daily news, it would never have occurred to us to write a script before the film was edited. If you look at the first Writers Guild contract, it's carefully spelled out. A news writer looks at the film and writes a script that tells what happens in a way that uses the pictorial values.

These days, if you turn your brightness knob to zero during any of the three network newscasts so that the screen is blank, you would not miss anything. Typically, less than a quarter, sometimes less than 10 percent of the pictures shown on the evening news were taken of an actual event. They are not even pictures; they are illustrations: Capitol dome, fields of wheat, gas station with prices. That's photojournalism? Photojournalism is dead.

All the networks are trying to do these days is to be like *The New York Times*. I wish I had a nickel for every correspondent at every network who tried to get a story through a New York desk, was turned down, and either leaked it to the *Times* or put it on the shelf. Because when the *Times* had it, then somebody would call the correspondent, usually at four in the morning, and say, "There's an interesting story in the *Times*..."

**M**y relations with Huntley and Brinkley were collegial. I produced *The Huntley-Brinkley Report* from 1956 until 1965 and I got caught between the two of them only twice. We all started out poor together. They respected my editorial judgment. If one of them objected to something strongly, I would amend.

Now, the anchors have taken over. When the star needs a producer, he or she calls the bullpen and the producer comes out in a little golf cart. Producers used to be chosen on the basis of a combination of editorial and production ability. Those were two skills you had to demonstrate in order to make it. Today, the executive producer of the evening news programs on the three networks is an executive producer the same way that Freddy de Cordova is executive producer of the Johnny Carson show. Anchors are exercising authority in areas where their competence was not a factor in their appointment. They are the editors now and that is a serious change.

Anchors have always had some editorial control. You could never make even Swayze say what he refused to say. He would say, "I'm not going to say this. What are you going to do to me if I don't?" But these days, with satellites, the networks have all their stories fed to New York, where several people sit in a room and watch them. Then they get on the trans-Atlantic, trans-Pacific, or, my God, the intergalactic phone and say, "In that third sentence, you should have said 'would' instead of 'will.'" Sometimes the guy sitting in New York has the AP story and corrects the facts of the guy on the spot. There is an argument because the guy on the ground saw it. And then the anchor walks by. He is a guy who is proud of his status. And, boy, are they ever proud of their status. He says, "I'm not sure that fits in with how I see the program." Another argument begins. The result depends on the personalities involved. Some anchors and producers trust each other. Some hate each other. Before you know it, they might use the story, cut it in half, or dump it. And if the argument is big enough, that reporter may not have his contract renewed when it comes up in eight months. I've seen it happen. I think it's outrageous.

A lot of the changes that have taken place in TV news in the last decade have been directly related to the development of technology. Suddenly, we could do everything. So being able to do it became its own justification. But there are all kinds of factors now. There's a dimension of competition that never existed before. CNN is one; what local people can do in the coverage of topics formerly reserved to network news is another. Affiliates don't

have to depend on the networks anymore. There are other sources. They can go to [Ted] Turner and he will sell to them.

I'll tell you. I've been here for thirty-six years. I've had seven or eight clearly identifiable and different jobs and have never changed employers. I've had a couple of bad years here and there. There were ups and downs. But I've had more fulfillment from my work than any reasonable man has a right to expect.

*Reuven Frank was interviewed by Laurence Zuckerman.*

## ROSALIE MULLER WRIGHT

*Rosalie Muller Wright has been feature and Sunday editor of the San Francisco Chronicle since March 1981, with responsibility for ten daily and Sunday feature sections. She is president of the American Association of Sunday and Feature Editors.*

**T**wenty-seven years ago, in 1959, I took my first job on a magazine. I was seventeen years old, a senior in high school. They hired me to write captions after school for *Suburban Life* in Orange, New Jersey. After five months, the managing editor left to take another job and I was made managing editor. I held the job full-time for two years while going to college full-time.



CJR/Steve Ringman/San Francisco Chronicle





**New West was for smart people. It put them on the cutting edge of cocktail parties. It was so up-market that the beer advertisers figured our audience only drank Scotch.**

I went from there to *Philadelphia* magazine as an assistant editor — a summer job between my junior and senior year at Temple University. The job stretched out to a year because I became pregnant toward the end of the summer and decided to go on working instead of going back to college. Then I got my degree and stayed home for several years until both boys were in school. When I went back to Philadelphia in the fall of '69 we were in the middle of the boom in city magazines.

The trend-setter at that time was Clay Felker, who had been the editor of the *New York Herald Tribune's* Sunday magazine and out of that created *New York* magazine. *New York* came up with these service stories — pieces about where to find the best frankfurter and how to choose a stockbroker — and also published a new style of reporting that started with Gail Sheehy's story "Red Pants and Sugar Man," about a prostitute, which was actually a composite story based on the lives of several women. We didn't go in for composites much at *Philadelphia*, but we did do the service stories and the investigatory pieces.

There were just five of us on the staff, and I was the only woman. Two or three times a week we would all go to lunch together at Bookbinder's, right across the street. There was no hierarchy. I was one of the boys, so to speak. I know that sounds terrible, but you know what I mean. I was immediately accepted on an absolutely equal level, and there was no question about it. Nobody ever expected me to give a woman's point of view or cover women-interest things. Heavens no!

The investigatory stories we did at *Philadelphia* were exciting and risky. There was a lot of corruption in the city at that time. Judges, public officials, people in the public trust who were skimming or doing wrong. But we had the whole field to ourselves, the whole shot, because none of the newspapers would rattle the cages. Walter Annenberg at the *Inquirer* had his own reasons for not wanting to expose certain areas, and the *Bulletin* was much too gentlemanly to do investigative reporting — so gentlemanly that it no longer exists. As for the local TV news, that was strictly clip-and-read. We had a small number of staffers, not terribly well-paid, but willing to work hard. We even had a private detective named Frank King on the payroll. Most important, we had what's called "publisher's will." We never called what we were doing investigative journalism. We just said, Hey, there's this good story! *Philadelphia* took three National Magazine Awards during the years I was there, all due to Alan Halpern, the editor.

But, two things happened. One, the Knight Newspapers — now Knight-Ridder — bought the *Inquirer*, and with Gene Roberts, a real solid editor, they began to do the kind of stories we had

specialized in. That made it harder for a monthly to compete in digging out local corruption. The other was the chilling effect of an increasing number of libel suits that were going against the press. Even if you win, you have to answer the complaints, do the discovery, research the case, pay your legal counsel. I don't think we suffered a failure of nerve, just a dose of reality. The same thing happened on a lot of city magazines. They began to emphasize service, life-styles, leisure.

At the end of 1973, I came out to California to start *womenSports* for Larry and Billie Jean King. It was Larry King's vision to do this very noble thing, but the magazine was ahead of its time. All the aerobic-exercise interest came five years later. We took the circulation up to 200,000 in eighteen months before they ran out of funds and I went over to the *Examiner* as editor of the daily feature section, the Scene section. I'd been there just over a year when I had an offer to become executive editor of *New West*, working here in northern California.

*New West* had been going for only eight or nine months. It was started early in 1976 by Clay Felker under the ownership of *New York* magazine. Clay had a vision of a magazine that would tell California about itself. But his costs got out of hand and he lost control to Rupert Murdoch at the beginning of 1977. Friends of mine who knew firsthand about the power struggles and disaffection in the staff warned me off the job. But I had been salivating over *New West* from the first issue. All that four-color! All that latitude to assign stories!

The investigative stuff that *New West* and *Philadelphia* did was memorable. I was the editor at *New West*, for instance, who broke the James Jones/Peoples Temple story. But it was not the entire substance of those magazines. Our emphasis was really on how to get along, how to enjoy life. *New West* was for smart people. It made them witty, put them on the cutting edge at cocktail parties. *New West* never could attract any beer advertising. It was so up-market that the beer advertisers figured our audience only drank Scotch.

We had what I considered a very eclectic political attitude at *New West*. We were not left-wingers, we were not right-wingers. We were on the side of the angels. But when the *Texas Monthly* folks bought the magazine from Rupert in August of 1980, Bill Broyles came in and the first thing he did was send around four pieces from Lewis Lapham's *Harper's* magazine — all very well-done pieces with a distinct right-wing tilt — and a note to this effect: okay, all you news staffers, this is why Reagan was elected. In other words, I'm expecting a more conservative approach.

Broyles changed the name from *New West* to *California*. Then he changed the frequency from twenty-six times a year to twelve, so we no longer had what we called "The fastest close in the West." He did away with the northern California regional edition. He had this messianic vision: "We're going to unite the state! We're going to bring northern and southern California together!"

Whoa! He was trying to clone *Texas Monthly* onto *New West*. Suddenly it wasn't the same magazine I had helped create, and knew and loved, and it was too painful to stay and watch it be destroyed. So I called Dick Thieriot [publisher of the *San Francisco Chronicle*] and said, "Let's have lunch." I left *New West* on a Friday and I reported to the *Chronicle* on a Monday. I don't like to lose a paycheck.

The city magazines haven't died as a genre. But they have changed focus since my magazine days. They're much more service-oriented, with less emphasis on the investigative stuff. But a lot of them are still very successful and profitable.

The reason, of course, is that they're hitting a special audience. The national magazines, the mass

magazines that died, were horizontal publications. They were trying to hit everybody. The city magazines are vertical publications. They're hitting just those folks who want service editorial material and also buy stereos or whatever it is the advertisers want to sell. And they still offer that special appeal to the people who want to be with it, if anybody uses that expression any more.

Editing feature sections on a mass-circulation newspaper, you try to stay slightly ahead of the trends, but certainly not as far ahead as the magazines I've worked for. I'm not saying you have to condescend, but you're getting everybody from a reading level of third grade on up, and you can't presume that everyone is as clever and smart as you'd like them to be.

Editing always is a matter of foreseeing: What are people going to be interested in next week, next month? It's not just that you want to be trendy, but you want to be reporting — how are people thinking? What's the next thing they're going to be talking about?

Rosalie Muller Wright was interviewed by Richard Reinhardt.

## DAVID BURNETT

*David Burnett was born in Salt Lake City in 1946 and was working professionally while still in high school there. As a photographer for Time and Life and, later, for his own photo agency (Contact Press Images), Burnett has won all three major awards for news photography — Magazine Photographer of the Year, the Robert Capa Gold Medal, and the World Press Photo Award. He lives in Arlington, Virginia, and works out of New York.*

**L**ike every other high school kid into photography, I wanted to be a *Life* photographer. I got the magazine every week, checked out who was in it and how they did. By 1963 it was pretty clear to me that that was the goal. I was working for a weekly then, the *Rocky Mountain Review*, after school and in the summer. I had this blue denim lab coat. I had gone to the typesetter and made a label that I stitched on the front that said "Eisie." You can't imagine what it meant to me the first time I met Alfred Eisenstaedt.

During spring break of my junior year at Colorado College, in 1967, I decided to go to New York to see somebody. You don't know who; you've just got to go and see who will see you. You make a lot of phone calls and eventually I got to meet Charlie Jackson, who was picture editor of *Time*. Charlie offered me a summer internship in the picture department working three days a

week for \$85 a week. I showed up for work in a serious dark-brown wool suit — winter weight — and a huge camera bag that contained every piece of equipment I owned.



David Burnett/Contact

**I was never a great combat photographer. Wasn't then, am not now. I'm not fearless and I have little sense of how to act in combat.**



**My dreams were dashed before me. I had been working all these years to be a hot-shot *Life* magazine photographer. All I had were some pictures of Vietnam which nobody wanted to look at.**

They decided to send me to the Washington bureau to cover for the regulars down there who would be on vacation. Wally Bennett, their Washington photographer, ran the show down there then. He was very generous. The best. He'd get five picture queries in the morning, give me two and take the rest for himself. It was no bullshit. "Here are some assignments, kid. Go do 'em."

I finished my last year of college, which was a bit anticlimactic, then went to Europe for a few months. When I returned Charlie Jackson gave me a guarantee of one day of work per week in the Washington bureau. Later, they offered some work at the Miami bureau and I took it.

The correspondent there was Joe Kane, who was terrific. We did a couple of Apollo launches, went to the Caribbean a few times, and then in the fall he was transferred to South America and not replaced. Without a correspondent to send or receive queries, work dries up pretty fast in a bureau for a free-lancer. I tried to get some work in advertising and managed to get two jobs in a year. My life centered around twice-a-day phone calls to the office to see if there was any work: "Anything today, Elaine?" "Not today, click." It took about a year, but eventually I realized I had to make a break.

I came back to New York and hung out in John Olson's apartment in New York. He was on *Life*'s staff and was back in Vietnam for a short tour so I took care of his Saint Bernard. I tried to wedge myself into the *Life* crowd but with not much success. Vietnam was still on the front page. People continued to talk about it. All the needles were pointing in that direction. Olson came back and said that he'd never tell anybody to go to Vietnam, but if I asked him, yes, there was still a lot of work to be done there. I asked *Time* if they would send me but they hesitated. Tim Page had been shot up bad; Sean Flynn, Dana Stone, and others had been lost in Cambodia. They didn't want to send somebody that they would have to assume all this responsibility for. So I said, okay, I'll buy a ticket and go by myself. They gave me some film and wrote me a free-lance letter which, with a similar letter from *Life*, enabled me to get accredited by the Defense Department.

I was never a great combat photographer. Wasn't then, am not now. I'm not fearless and I have little sense of how to act in combat. I've been with Don McCullin, who has the gift. Once we were in a situation when the shooting started and he got up and started moving around this tank like it was perfectly natural. I stayed where I was and felt like a schmo. It was good for him to be out there. It just wasn't as good for me to be next to him.

In the fall of 1972 I decided to pack it in. *Life* was bringing me back to their Chicago bureau but wanted to season me in New York for a few months

where I'd get to know the *Life* editors I'd be working with. I did a few small stories; then, on December 7, 1972, there was a big going-away party for me. I was finally going to be a *Life* photographer. Olson and Sean Callahan, the deputy picture editor at *Life*, showed up in a strange mood. The rest of the guests were from *Time*, *The New York Times*, and other press organizations. Finally, Callahan and Olson could stand it no longer and took me into a bedroom and told me that the next morning *Time* Inc. would announce the folding of *Life* but that we couldn't say anything — especially to the guests outside — because the stock exchange had to be notified to suspend trading *Time* stock and the *Life* staff was to be notified by seven A.M. to get in early for the announcement. So we went back out to the party and every time somebody commented on my burgeoning career we broke into fits of hysterical laughter.

**M**y dreams were dashed before me. I had been working all these years to be a hot-shot *Life* magazine photographer, which I just missed becoming. All I really had were some pictures of Vietnam, which at this time nobody wanted to look at. After a few months I started to work for Gamma, the French picture agency, and suddenly I was doing the kinds of stories I would have done for *Life*, and some I wouldn't have been able to do: Chile, the Naples cholera epidemic, mass murders in Texas, drought in West Africa, Watergate. But there was a difference. I was running leaner.

When you work for an agency, everything is on speculation. This makes you a sharper journalist. In an agency you split the profits but you also split the expenses. You become quicker and more self-reliant as a result. I can find the cheapest rent-a-car in three phone calls on any continent now. Staff photographers tend to rely on the organization for those things, and eventually for a lot of other things that they should do for themselves. In trying to figure out how to get things done you open up other possibilities that lead to other contacts that lead to different perspectives on a story. You get more involved in the story than you would if you were sitting around in your giant suite or big car. It's not just a matter of being frugal or clever. If you look at the best work being done in Europe you'll see it's by the independent agency photographers. They consistently kick our asses. And it has something to do with the way they work.

In America, everybody was going around saying that photojournalism was dead now that *Life* was gone. But nobody would have believed that in Europe, with *Stern*, *Match*, and dozens of other news magazines that used lots of pictures. I started to

get back these tearsheets from all over — some of them, admittedly, from not the greatest of magazines, but who is to say that it's worse to be published in a magazine that's still publishing than not to be published in a magazine that's dead? Contrary to what I was hearing in New York, photojournalism was not dead. Agency work was what kept me alive those first few years after *Life*.

The business was changing. The agencies controlled the photographers to a greater degree than ever before. The agency determined who got the work and where they would be working. They controlled the ammunition but it was still someone else who owned the gun, who pointed it in the right direction and pulled the trigger. The dream, shared by many photojournalists today, is to have their own picture magazine some day, but that will never be.

But that was what made me want to have my own agency. In 1976, I got together with a few colleagues and we started Contact. We still do a lot of running around for *Time* and the other magazines but we have more control over our own time, and what we think is important. I think I've worked in sixty countries so far. One year my passport had to have three accordions in it for all the visas. The travel is fun in the beginning but it wears on you. And now with the increased security around the world, guys like me who carry a lot of strange suitcases get stopped a lot. It's becoming a real pain to get from Place A to Place B.

There are fewer markets for quality work now. I miss those magazines but I also miss more not having the regular contact with editors who have ideas and ways of doing things that I might not think about from where I am on the outside.

*Life* does some nice things once in a while but it seems to have lost its punch in converting to a monthly. *Stern* is pretty good at times, the London *Sunday Times Magazine*, and *Match* on occasion. The *Geos* — French and German editions. *National Geographic* is still one of the very few class acts. The depths to which they go on a story is extraordinary. Nobody has the resources to keep you in the field for four months like they do. *Time* and *Newsweek*, on occasion, run a picture well or will do a special fold-out, but I think that they are still too literal in their use of photography. The pictures have to illustrate the text instead of doing something else that can add to the story.

As you gain experience there are times when you know that you are a hired gun. You're just solving a problem for them. But there are still times when they really want your take, your vision of the story. You always tell yourself that they are buying your vision, but more often it's "What vision? Just send the film."

Since I'm an old man at forty in this business,

kids are always asking me for advice about magazine photojournalism, and they are surprised when I tell them I think that there is something very special about newspapers — you get to see your work published quickly. My newspaper friends say that wears off, but it hasn't ever for me. A lot of papers are giving photographers more time and more trips. A lot more foreign travel. It's very prestigious for a paper to have their own person on the scene and they tend to use the pictures well because they don't want to waste their investment.

I'd like to think that there will still be photographers in ten years and that our profession won't be ruled by gorillas carrying video cameras. I sure hope so because other than one summer straightening deck chairs as a pool boy, I don't have any other skills. I like to think that if it ever comes to a time when video wipes us out, they still will need old guys like me to aim the cameras.

David Burnett was interviewed by Sean Callahan.

## CONSTANT C. DEJOIE, JR.

*For nearly half a century, Constant C. Dejoie, Jr., has worked as editor and then publisher of The Louisiana Weekly, a small black-oriented newspaper in New Orleans. Like most of the black press, the newspaper, whose masthead proclaims it "the oldest and foremost in south Louisiana," has fallen on hard times. Circulation has dwindled to about 7,000, and stringers contribute most of the copy. But Dejoie, now seventy-one, says he remains "optimistic."*



CJR/Kurt Mutschler/Times-Picayune





**Every night when I went home I'd always be looking up and down the street, wondering if someone was going to take a shot at me.**

**M**y father founded this paper: Constant C. Dejoie, senior. It was in September of, let's see, I think it was 1925. My father was president and general manager of a company called Unity Life Insurance Company. He never really got into journalism himself. He just thought that black people ought to have a voice. And he took it upon himself to organize a newspaper, a weekly newspaper. I came here on June 25, 1938. I had been to school at the University of Michigan, and I got a masters in journalism up there. I started out as general manager. Two or three years after that, I was promoted to editor. I was editor until my father died in 1970. Then I became president and publisher.

Back then, my father had his insurance company in the next block, and we were in a building right next door. It's a vacant lot now. It was a two-story building, and we did all the typing and layout. We had a small paper, a small staff. I'd say about a dozen or more — reporters, advertising, business office. We covered general news, with an emphasis on social, sports, and church, for the black community. It was terrific.

You know, a black newspaper always has a different angle from whatever the white paper has, because when you're talking to people you get different answers, you ask different questions. It's almost a whole new story. The white press always had a black that worked for them. There was a fella, H. H. Dunn, he was a minister, and he used to get paid so much an inch for what he wrote. But he mostly wrote about church news and people dying and getting awards. He didn't cover any so-called controversial stories, if you know what I mean.

Mostly my talent was editorial writing. My theme then is what it is today: We always talk about democracy, why don't we preach it here at home? If we want to export it, we ought to have a good example of it here. I had some of those editorials in a folder [rummages in a file drawer]. Here's a whole bunch of them. "Only Votes Make Democracy Work"; this was in '59. Here's a couple others. "Will Justice Be Done?"; this is about three white men being indicted, who confessed to the kidnapping and rape of a nineteen-year-old black coed at Florida A and M.

There was a time when I was threatened. You'd get phone calls. They were mostly crank calls. They'd call you up. Sometimes I'd be working at night and they'd call up my wife and they'd threaten her, and tell her what they were going to do to me. One thing I was really afraid of, it was during that time that Medgar Evers had been shot, in Mississippi. He'd been shot from a distance, like someone was in the block and took a shot at

him. He was an NAACP leader in Mississippi, and he'd been fighting for the cause. Every night when I went home I'd always be looking up and down the street, wondering if someone was going to take a shot at me. I had a lot of anxious moments.

Some awful things would happen. I don't know if you've ever heard of Leander Perez. He was what they called the czar of Plaquemines parish. He was the boss, he was the dictator. He was the district attorney and the attorney for the parish; he played both sides. In the fifties, a black man was murdered and the body was exhumed. His name was Smith, and he had been killed down there in a strange sort of a way, and everyone thought it was murder. We tried to get down there and investigate and they wouldn't even let us in the parish. We went down there several times. When you came to the parish line his deputies were there and they'd say, "You can't come in here. We don't want you." In those days you didn't have a lot of lawyers to challenge him. They'd take you away or take you in the woods somewhere, do away with you. You just knew better than to go into his parish; it was like running into that wall with your head down.

Circulation was at its peak in the early fifties — somewhere around 21,000. We had a big country circulation. It was one of the ideas of my father. Since he had this insurance company, insurance agents would sell the paper or would get people to sell the paper. They just went everywhere — Shreveport, Alexandria, Lake Charles, Beaumont. We had almost as much state circulation as we had city circulation at one time. What killed our circulation country-wide, the railroads went out of business. Bus companies couldn't do it, and people just couldn't get their papers in time.

I can tell you a story about what has happened in a general sense. When we were fighting for our rights, we had people like the Urban League, NAACP, all your black leaders came to the black press to get their bearings, and we would talk about different things. Thurgood Marshall was a lawyer for the NAACP at the time, and he was friendly and this was one of his regular visits. I would see Thurgood at least three or four times a year. But today, with the white media being what it is, these people can get on television and it's seldom that you really see them. They bounce into town and bounce out of town and television gets them when they speak, so they don't have to make it a point to see the black press anymore.

You have very few black papers with extensive circulations, like they used to have years ago. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Chicago Defender*, the *Afro-American*, they were great newspapers, with big circulations. But now you've got a lot of black journalists working for white newspapers. That is

one of the things that weaned people away from the black press.

The trouble right now is getting the advertising. We got a bank, they advertise. We got a few funeral parlors, but funeral parlors don't advertise as much. Now the white funeral parlors are burying Negroes. There was a time when you couldn't get buried except by blacks. At one time we had a lot of insurance companies, but most of the insurance companies have sold out to white firms. When you analyze it, there's a whole lot of things that hurt.

I'll give you an example. Years ago, on Mothers Day or Fathers Day, we'd have our paper filled up with in-memoriams, remembering the dead. Now, when we have Mothers Day and Fathers Day, you know who has the most in-memoriams? *The Times-Picayune*. More black in-memoriams than we do. It hurts you. It sometimes makes you wonder what you were fighting for. But I guess that's a sign of the times.

*Constant C. Dejoie, Jr., was interviewed by John Lancaster.*

## LOREN JENKINS

*Loren Jenkins has worked as a foreign correspondent since 1966 for UPI, Newsweek, and The Washington Post. He is currently the Post's correspondent in Rome.*

**T**oday, major events have become big cluster effects of journalists stumbling over one another. A lot of that has to do with television. When I first got into the business, a TV crew consisted of three people — reporter, cameraman, and soundman. Then, about ten years ago, TV moved into video cameras, making it possible to edit on the spot. That required sending whole editing studios into the field. Now TV crews arrive with forty or fifty people — producers, editors, gofers, everything. Press conferences are totally dominated by television. There are ten TV cameras in front of you and everyone else is pushed out. It's unseemly.

Also, news sources tend to gravitate toward television. A head of state would rather sit down with a TV crew for ten or fifteen minutes — which will be edited down to forty-five seconds — than sit for an hour with a print journalist, who might ask more in-depth, embarrassing questions. Even in the third world, officials today are geared toward television. Qaddafi knows he will come across better on television than in a print interview, which will probably point out the fallacies of what he says. Television just captures the man talking.

On the plus side, officials in the third world are much more open to the media than in the past. When I first went to the Middle East, in 1970, it was horrendous to be an American correspondent. No one wanted to talk to you. Everyone regarded you as the enemy because our country supported Israel. In countries like Iraq and Syria you spent most of your time scratching around for bits of information from second- and third-hand sources. When I first went to Egypt, under Nasser, there were literally five official Egyptians authorized to talk with foreign journalists. Everyone saw the same five people, and got the same story.

Today, Ben Bradlee goes into Syria and has an interview with Assad. Assad, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Yasir Arafat of the PLO — all have become very publicity conscious. They realize that it can serve their interests to speak to the outside world. When I first went to Beirut, it was almost impossible to find anyone in the PLO to talk to you; today, they're banging on your door. In Central America, too, there's much greater access to the other side. The contras, the guerrillas in El Salvador — you can find them in Mexico, or down the road. They recognize you as a journalist, not as an enemy.

Things changed even in Vietnam. At the beginning of the war, everyone was "on board." There was a sort of World War II mentality that saw everything in terms of good guys and bad guys, that reduced the enemy to caricatures. Then people

**The general mood today is one of greater acceptance of government, greater nationalism—jingoism, even.**



CJR/Sara Jenkins



**My generation came out of the sixties, when it was common to question our society and our motives and our leaders. The reporters coming along today are a different breed. I find them very directed, total workaholics, totally devoted to their publication.**

started going in and finding the Vietcong and the National Liberation Front. By the end of the war, people would drive down the road and walk across rice paddies and spend a week interviewing the Vietcong. Then they'd come back and write it up. As a result, I think we did a pretty good job of telling the story of Vietnam.

In the end, though, I'm not sure Vietnam has had that much of a lasting effect on the profession. I think we've gone back some. I know for a fact that newspapers, including my own, sniff the wind and say, "Well, we don't want to be too far out in front of what the general mood is." And the general mood today is one of greater acceptance of government, greater nationalism — jingoism, even. The Reagan phenomenon has been reflected in the risks newspapers are willing to take and the stories they're willing to pursue. They're much more willing to accept Washington's version of events.

There's also been a generational change. My generation came out of the sixties, when it was common to question our society and our motives and our leaders. The reporters coming along today are a different breed. They have a less broad interest than we had. I find them very directed, intense, total workaholics, totally devoted to their publication. A lot view being a foreign correspondent not as an ultimate career to aspire to but as a ticket to be punched. A lot say, "I'll take one or two tours and then get back to Washington or New York. I want to be an editor." There's much more ambition now to move up the ladder. For my generation and the generation before, being a foreign correspondent was something you really wanted to do. I didn't want to write about the city or Washington. I didn't want to be a political pundit. I wanted to be out there, where foreign affairs are being molded and played out.

Not that I realized all of that at once. After college, I avoided facing up to having to earn a living. For a few years, I taught skiing in Aspen. But I realized there wasn't much of a long-term career in that. Besides, I wanted to go overseas. [After a stretch in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone and a year studying foreign affairs at Columbia University], I got my first taste of being a foreign correspondent when I took a job with a small paper in Westchester County called the *Port Chester Daily Item*. I covered Greenwich. That was pretty foreign. After three months or so I called up UPI in New York and somehow got put through to the city editor. One of his correspondents had just been transferred to London, and he asked, "Can you start Monday?" So I went down and covered New York City. I stayed a year. The whole time I kept saying, "I've traveled, I know the world, I speak several languages — what am I doing covering city

hall?" So they sent me to London. That was 1966. And I haven't been back since. This is my career. It's what I enjoy.

It's different with younger reporters. Not many are prepared to go out and stay out. Most aren't adaptable enough. The world likes to think that living abroad is great and romantic and that's why we're doing it. But we spend a lot of time in miserable places. It can be pretty rough — rough on families, rough on your health. Now, after many years, I live in Rome. That seems nice — except when they call you up and tell you to go to Basra again, on the Iran-Iraq front. Yes, there's glamour, but there's also malaria, sleeping in beds full of bedbugs, dealing with hostile people. There's no fun in that.

It's also more dangerous today. When I first went to Beirut, in 1970, it wasn't too bad. If you were a journalist, you were considered neutral. Today they kidnap you. They execute you. The sheer growth of the firepower in Beirut is awesome. When I first arrived the battles were fought with small arms — rifles and pistols. In 1982 we were dive-bombed by F-16s and pounded by 155 artillery. There's no safe haven. Even in Vietnam, if you got back from the field and checked into the Continental Palace, you were comfortable. You could take a shower, put on some clean clothes, have a good French meal, drink wine, chase women, do whatever else you wanted to do. You could go to bed in clean sheets and not really be afraid you weren't going to wake up. In Beirut, you go to sleep in the Commodore Hotel and wonder whether artillery shells will come in and blow out your room. I've covered most of the major conflicts over the last fifteen or twenty years — Angola, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, El Salvador, Nicaragua, the Middle East. And today I won't go to Beirut. I just consider it totally suicidal.

One day I think I'll probably leave Italy. If I do, I'd like to go to Mexico. Mexico is a really important story — much more important than Central America. The collapse of Mexico would turn America on its ear. How can we avoid it? How can we help the Mexicans avoid it? We have to start thinking about that.

True, people don't always seem interested in reading about Mexico. But the function of the media is to educate the public about problems. I know this runs against the grain of people who run newspapers, but I think our profession has a social obligation to say, "All right, guys, you may not want to have to deal with this, but here's a major problem." Unfortunately, the press itself doesn't have any power. Politicians like to get up and rail about the power of the press. My God, I wish we did have some power. Then maybe some of the things we think are wrong with the world could be

changed. But we don't. We say things, and the politicians either ignore us or call us a bunch of pinko lefties. We provide a nice, easy scapegoat. But the times will change. The pendulum will swing.

Loren Jenkins was interviewed  
by Michael Massing.

## LADD HAMILTON

*Ladd Hamilton, sixty-four, joined the staff of the Lewiston, Idaho, Morning Tribune as a reporter in 1948. He served as managing editor from 1972 until 1977, when, as he puts it, "We had a change of administration and I was bounced up to something called senior editor." His current duties include writing editorials and a Sunday column. He begins his days by playing the flute before going to work, as he has for years. He has no plans to retire. "I'm still having a good time," he says.*

**W**hen I came here thirty-eight years ago, you could throw the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* on a stack of other dailies and recognize it immediately because it had its own style, its own way of arranging the news, its flourishes and mannerisms. For example, we were the only newspaper that I ever heard of that never carried a local story on page one, no matter how big or important it might be. If the mayor died in a shoot-out with the water commissioner, it would be on the back page. We reserved page one for national and international news, and the back page for our local news. It looked funny to a lot of other people, but it was one of the things that made this paper distinctive.

I came here from a paper in Oregon where the rule was that we had to have a local banner at the top of page one every day, whether there was anything to report or not. That paper reflected that publisher and that town and this one reflected this publisher and this town. But now the *Tribune* looks exactly like that paper in Oregon. The average paper no longer carries the imprint of its publisher and its community. It looks like something stamped out by a cookie cutter.

It's buyouts and mergers, for one thing. And scrambling for efficiency. And seminars like the American Press Institute. You have all these people going to API and listening to all these experts tell them how to put their paper together, and after all your editors have been to API your paper looks exactly like the papers of all the other editors who've been to API. I think that's a disgrace. We should maintain our personalities.

From 1946 until 1968, our paper bore the indelible stamp of our publisher, Bud Alford, the nephew of the previous publisher and the father of the current one. He was a crotchety man, short, stout, full of his own ideas of what a paper ought to do. He read every word of the paper every day, and he worked seven days a week. Never took a day off. He would write these mean, angry, bitter notes to the staff in the morning: "How could anyone who calls himself a newspaper reporter possibly do a story like this?" and "God, how could you bring yourselves to come in here today after that performance last night?" And then you'd see him later, in the hallway, or after work in the bar around the corner, and he loved you like a brother. His arm was on your back: "How are you, Ladd? How's your family?" He had a really firm grip on the newsroom, but he didn't seem to care that much about the rest of the operation. The business office ran itself.

He was a hard-drinking man. He drank Jack Daniels by the gallon. But he couldn't hold his liquor very well. He'd get falling-down drunk, and somebody would call me or someone else from the *Tribune* and we'd go get him and take him home. He got arrested for driving while drinking twice. On both occasions he called the *Tribune* and said, "I got arrested for drunk driving. Be sure that's in the paper in the morning."



CJR/Barry Kough/Lewiston Morning Tribune

**The average paper no longer carries the imprint of its publisher and its community. It looks like something stamped out by a cookie cutter.**





He had very strict rules. You were never *in* a city; you were always *at* a city. You could be *in* the county or the state, but you had to be *at* the cemetery. We used to have the most severe “down” style in the Northwest. We didn’t even capitalize the names of the political parties. We capitalized God, but the publisher was grudging about it. Now, we go by AP style. Maybe it’s easier to do it that way, but I miss the old diversity. I miss seeing personality in a newspaper.

We used to have an informal guideline that said we should have at least sixteen to twenty stories on page one, plus a picture or two. Now, like every other paper our size in the whole country, we’re down to four stories on page one, sometimes three, with large art. Lots of stuff across the top. Blurbs that tell you what to look for inside. An index in one corner. And, frequently, some game is going on — Pot of Gold, Birthday Bucks — and that’s on the top of the page every day, too.

The newsroom doesn’t have the feel of a newspaper plant anymore. It doesn’t smell like it either. I can remember walking in here and being assaulted by the wonderful smell of a newspaper: smelling the lead and the ink and the aprons of the typesetters. It was a whole conglomeration of odors. Maybe typewriter ribbons were part of it, too. Now there’s an absence of smell. We have carpets on the floor. And little cubicles with computers in them. People chatting in hushed tones. It has the feel of a loan office.

People do less talking back and forth. For one thing, they’re not sitting like you and I are sitting, facing each other. They’re sitting and peering at screens. Each person is in his own little world with his computer screen. It seems to isolate them. That’s part of it. The other part is that it’s a quiet room. They’ve taken all the noise out of it. The old background clatter that would be the accompaniment for conversation is gone. There’s a hush that people don’t feel like interrupting.

We were one of the last papers in the Northwest to go to computers. That was three years ago. Great apprehension on the part of the staff. Fear and loathing. We had only recently gotten new typewriters — *manual* typewriters because the reporters voted against electrics. Those were well broken in and we were happy with them. People would come into our newsroom from other papers and express great shock that we were still using typewriters. Some of them would pause and listen and enjoy the sound.

Finally, the boss decided the time had come to computerize. We were so late that there was nobody left to sell our old stuff to. The linotypes were all junked, except for three. We keep one downstairs. We gave one to a pastor who uses it to put out his church bulletin. We gave the other one to

the local museum. We had a perfectly good press. Couldn’t find a buyer. We sold it for scrap.

I’ve never understood why they call it a “front-end system.” But that’s what we’ve got, and there’s not a single person out there who would ever want to go back and touch a typewriter again. Myself included.

The quality of the writing, by and large, is better. I don’t know why. Maybe the reporters are getting a better grounding in English, or we’re just getting better candidates. The people coming into this business today seem to be more serious about it. They have careers in mind. People in the ’40s and ’50s looked at this as strictly a job, like any other job. They could change to something better if something better came along. They had no big commitment to journalism as such. I think a person who comes to work with the attitude that this is my life’s work will do a better job than someone who says this is good enough for right now.

**W**e worked hard. A reporter would come in and find on his desk an assignment sheet, maybe a page long with a dozen assignments on it. You’d start out feeling terrible because you couldn’t possibly get that much work done. Then you’d see that mean, nasty gripe sheet from Bud, telling you about the miserable failures of the day before. It was a hard way to start the day. Then, about midway through the shift, you would have covered some of those assignments and turned in your copy and things would start getting rosier and rosier. You’d feel happier and happier and end up feeling pretty damn good and go celebrate at the bar after work.

There’s a little less after-hours socializing among the staff than there used to be; some loss of camaraderie. There may have been something about the difficulty of getting the paper out in the early days that pulled people together and made them partners in some cause. We seem nowadays to work pretty much in isolation. We don’t even walk up to the desk and turn our work in anymore; we just punch a key on a computer.

I miss the old. It was part of my growing up. But I wouldn’t go back to it. I’m not foolish enough to pretend that it was a lot of fun working the city desk in that old building, especially in August, with no air-conditioning. Looking at awful copy. Overworked. Every change brings benefits and drawbacks. Every time you move a step ahead you look back, with fond recollections of the place you just left. Whoever comes along now is going to miss some of the fun we had. They’re also going to miss some of the drudgery. It all balances out.

*Ladd Hamilton was interviewed by Cassandra Tate.*

**The newsroom doesn’t have the feel of a newspaper plant anymore. We have carpets on the floor. And little cubicles with computers in them. It has the feel of a loan office.**

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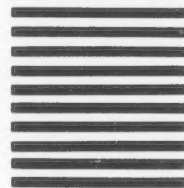
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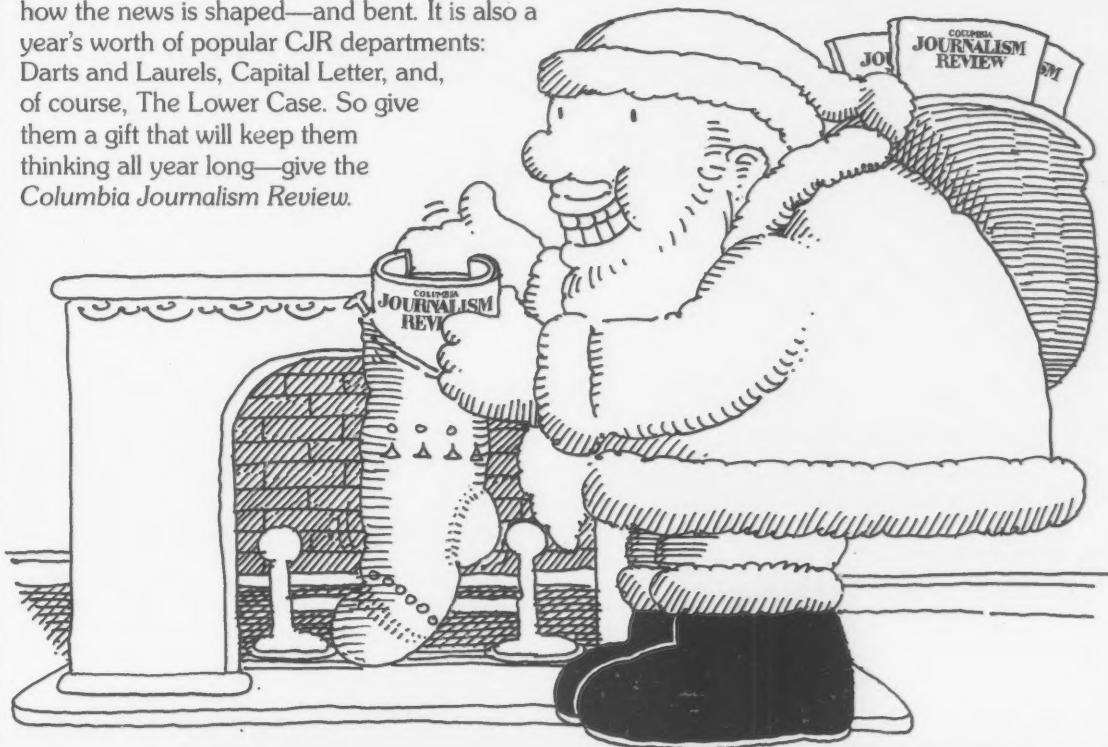
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# Medical Research— building a healthier future

If you've ever been treated for high blood pressure... heart disease... diabetes... or almost any health problem, medical progress based on research has already touched your life.

Because of medical research, polio no longer strikes in epidemic proportions every summer. Today about three-quarters of patients diagnosed as having Hodgkin's disease will survive five years or longer—as opposed to less than half twenty years ago. Current treatment options for people with heart disease and high blood pressure include medication that helps the body's natural regulators to control blood pressure and volume, enabling the heart to function with less strain.

Scientists are now working on new ways of treating such devastating afflictions as heart disease, cancer and Alzheimer's disease. They are testing new enzyme inhibitors that may control or reverse the late complications of diabetes. Forthcoming breakthroughs in understanding biological processes and treating disease may change the quality and perhaps the length of your life.

Medical research leading to such results takes years of patient, often frustrating experimentation by many different teams throughout the public and private sectors of our scientific community. The tasks involved are not simple.

Advances in research stem from a partnership that includes federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA), universities and teaching hospitals across America, and private industry laboratories. Each partner often works independently to acquire knowledge and test new concepts. They must build on the knowledge developed in all laboratories, and they often coordinate efforts in their search for answers.

Whether an idea originates in a university laboratory or starts with basic product research carried on in the private sector, important findings percolate through the

entire scientific community, where each new finding serves as a building block to establish a deeper understanding of what we are and how we function.

Medical research is an expensive process. It needs steady funding for equipment and personnel—even when progress is slow. Government and industry often work with university-based scientists and the medical profession not only in the acquisition of new knowledge and the development of new treatments, but also in funding these advances.

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JOURNALISM REVIEW  
IS BORN.

OCTOBER, 1970. IN HER NEW BOOK  
BARBARA WALTERS STATES THAT,  
"NIXON HAS SEX APPEAL - HE'S  
SLIM AND SUNTANNED AND...  
WELL, HE'S JUST SEXY.  
THAT'S ALL."



AUGUST, 1985. PHYLLIS GEORGE IS "LET GO"  
AS HOST OF CBS  
MORNING NEWS, BUT

THE NETWORK  
HAS TO PAY OFF  
HER CONTRACT:  
REPORTEDLY  
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IN 1985,  
\$1 MILLION  
IN 1986,  
AND \$1.2  
MILLION  
IN 1987.  
THE EXIT DEAL  
CAME IN THE  
MIDST OF A  
CRACKDOWN  
ON COSTS.





OCTOBER, 1975. BERNSTEIN AND WOODWARD ARE INFORMED THAT ROBERT REDFORD WILL PLAY WOODWARD IN THE MOVIE VERSION OF ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN.



AUGUST, 1964. TIME AND NEWSWEEK BOTH RUN "EYEWITNESS" YOU-ARE-THERE ACCOUNTS OF THE HEROIC BATTLE OF THE GULF OF TONKIN, WHICH NEVER HAPPENED.

DECEMBER, 1974. WILLIAM BUCKLEY WRITES: "PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED GERALD FORD AT CLOSE QUARTERS KNOW THAT HE IS A MAN OF NIMBLE INTELLIGENCE WHO QUICKLY UNDERSTANDS THE DIMENSIONS OF A PROBLEM."

MARCH 1970. TRICIA NIXON FEELS THAT AGNEW'S ATTACKS ON THE NEWS MEDIA HAVE HAD A SALUTARY EFFECT: "I'M A CLOSE WATCHER OF NEWSPAPERS AND TV. I THINK THEY'VE TAKEN A SECOND LOOK. YOU CAN'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF FEAR...."





OCTOBER, 1980. AFTER  
(SECRETLY) COACHING  
RONALD REAGAN FOR HIS  
DEBATE WITH JIMMY  
CARTER, GEORGE  
WILL DESCRIBES  
REAGAN'S PERFORMANCE  
AS THAT OF A  
"THOROUGHBRED".



CJREdward Sorel

JUNE, 1986. AFTER RESISTING  
FIERCELY FOR TWELVE YEARS,  
A.M. ROSENTHAL CAPITULATES  
TO WOMEN'S DEMANDS THAT  
THE N.Y. TIMES USE "MS."  
INSTEAD OF "MISS" OR "MRS."



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## Times Mirror

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# BOOKS

## How the best was lost

**The Paper: The Life and Death of the New York Herald Tribune**

by Richard Kluger

Alfred A. Knopf. 816 pp. \$24.95

by WILLIAM ZINSER

One morning in 1955 I looked up from my desk at the *New York Herald Tribune* and saw a curious figure being escorted across the city room toward the corner office of the executive editor, George A. Cornish. The visitor was a small man wearing a shabby black suit and a black

hat, who looked as if his job might be to stamp passports at the airport in Bogota, and he was carrying a long black box.

Word soon got around that his name was Louis Azzaraga, that the box contained a secret camera that could take panoramic pictures, and that he had just been hired by Ogden R. "Brown" Reid, then president and editor, to enliven the paper with his miraculous wares. Sure enough, over the next few weeks the *Herald Tribune's* front page, long an ornament of American typography, was dismembered to accommodate an eight-column photograph — often running

above the paper's handsome masthead — showing forty or fifty blocks' worth of New York skyline.

There was no journalistic reason for running the pictures — they conveyed no information that the reader couldn't glean with his own two panoramic eyes. Nor were they notable examples of the art; the paper's own photographers did far more interesting work every day.

---

*William Zinsser, author of On Writing Well, was with the New York Herald Tribune for thirteen years as editor, critic, and editorial writer. He is currently general editor of the Book-of-the-Month Club.*

*The Herald Tribune's newsroom in the 1960s.*



courtesy John Hay Whitney



What the pictures did have was one undeniable trait: they were very wide. After a while the owners realized what everybody else knew — that there isn't much demand for very wide pictures — and Louis Azzaraga vanished as abruptly as he had come. Nobody ever did find out what was in the black box.

Anyone might suppose that this dalliance between the paper and the panorama monger was one of those aberrations that can happen in the best of corporate families. But it was no aberration. Louis Azzaraga was just one in a long series of conjurers whom the Reids hired in their apparently deep belief that quality wouldn't be their salvation but that gimmickry might.

I went to work for the *Herald Tribune* in 1946, right after World War II, when it was generally thought to be the best written and best edited major newspaper in America; certainly it was the best loved, both by its readers and by its staff. I left in the fall of 1959 when the paper was far along in the decay of body and spirit that in 1966 would kill it. My thirteen years happened to be pivotal ones in this swift change of metabolism. They spanned the final years of Ogden M. Reid, a man who in his long editorship (1913-1947) had the wisdom not to meddle with competent help; the successive regimes of his feckless sons, Whitelaw and Ogden, laboring under the icy blue gaze of their dowager mother, Helen R. Reid; and the end of the Reid dynasty with the purchase of the paper by John Hay Whitney, who, I hoped, would halt the decline. But I soon saw that the new owner understood no more about how to run a paper than the family he had bought it from.

Much has been written about why the *Herald Tribune* died, and the stated reasons are usually financial: the rising cost of newsprint, the unrealistic demands of nine unions, the tightening grip of *The New York Times* on retail advertising, the inability of the city to support two papers that appealed to the same readers. All true — death was ultimately caused by not enough money coming in and too much going out. But it also takes people to kill a newspaper, and the fate of the *Herald Tribune* was only half determined by the flow of currency. There

was also the flow of people: the constant departure in sadness and despair of men and women who knew what they were doing and the constant arrival of men and women who didn't.

**R**ichard Kluger's book about the life and death of the *Herald Tribune* has been long awaited by us survivors. Kluger, the author of *Simple Justice*, has been a hovering presence in our lives, tracking down and interviewing 223 men and women — many of whom have since died — who played some part in the story. (They are all cited in the appendix.) He has also gone digging in private papers, diaries, unpublished memoirs, correspondence, and oral histories, as well as in the usual historical sources. His research is prodigious and his book is prodigiously long: 801 tightly packed pages.

Kluger himself was on the paper — as literary editor — only during its last four years. But he gives the impression of also having been around in 1835 when James Gordon Bennett founded the *New York Herald*, in 1841 when Horace Greeley founded the *New York Tribune*, in 1924 when the two papers merged, and in all the subsequent years of glory and degradation. *The Paper* is a brilliant achievement in its thoroughness and its warmth.

At first I was stunned by its size and scope. Did I really have to go all the way back to the 1830s? I wanted to start with the paper I knew. But I started at the beginning and was surprised to find myself on interesting terrain. I discovered that most of the conventions of American newspaper journalism that I've always taken for granted had their origin in the nineteenth century and were the product of fiercely energetic minds.

The first of the great innovators was Bennett, a cynical Scot, whose *Herald* took its strength from his own writing style and from his perception that the city dweller — a new American species — was a lonely person who craved a sense of belonging to a larger community. Bennett satisfied this hunger by greatly expanding coverage of local news, opening a Washington bureau, and assembling a network of correspondents in Europe, thereby making the *Herald* the

first paper to offer systematic foreign coverage. He saw, Kluger says, that "newspapers have saved only a limited number of souls . . . what they can do at their best is to inform."

But soon another giant was on the scene, this one a believer in uplift. "No other public teacher lives so wholly in the present as the Editor," Horace Greeley said of his vocation, revealing his edifying bent, and the current that animated his paper was moral outrage. "He treated the columns of the *Tribune* as his personal pulpit," Kluger says. "Many mocked him for it, but none doubted the sincerity of his passion. It was the making of the paper."

An early feminist, Greeley lured Margaret Fuller away from her Transcendentalist circle in Concord in 1844 to write articles that caught "the wide, free rush of New York life." To find Emerson's fellow sage among my journalistic forebears was one of many unexpected pleasures in Kluger's book, reminding me that any history of American newspapers is also a history of American life, drawing its walk-on actors from all points of the artistic, political, and social compass. It was news to me, for instance, that Jacob Riis didn't spring full-blown as a social reformer; he first saw the squalid conditions of New York's Lower East Side as a workaholic police reporter on the *Tribune*, newly arrived as an immigrant himself and trying to make ends meet.

Then, as later, newspaper owners disliked nothing so much as spending money. Greeley's exploitation of his brightest young assistant, Henry Raymond, began "a pattern that would mark the entire history of the paper: it attracted young men of extraordinary talent and underpaid them, forcing all but a handful of the most devoted to go elsewhere." Raymond went off and founded *The New-York Daily Times* — a bit of false economy that Greeley's successors would forever regret. Raymond's *Times* "exhibited from the beginning precisely the qualities that have sustained it since: prudence, good manners, and industry in the gathering, editing, and presentation of the news. Its columns throughout were marked by an almost unrelieved seriousness."

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## BOOKS

One of Greeley's legacies to the modern newspaper was the editorial page. In the 1850s his robust editorials were institutionalized on a separate page and became the national prototype. But the pivotal event in that first great epoch was the Civil War. People were desperate for news, and "the newspaper came into its own as a habitual form of literature." The modern news lead was developed, and individual reporters for the first time achieved recognition. Many of the pieces that they filed are still classics, such as George Smalley's 8,000-word account of the battle of Antietam. Kluger vividly catches the courage and resourcefulness of those reporters — early ancestors of two *Herald Tribune* correspondents whose heroic exploits almost a century later he will also describe: Homer Bigart at Cassino and Marguerite Higgins in Korea.

But the first blood ancestor to turn up in *The Paper* is Whitelaw Reid, who acquired control of the *Tribune* in 1872. I had no trouble recognizing him — an introvert who "built around him a wall of reserve that repulsed familiarity"; the same immobilizing gene was handed down to his grandson and namesake, the *Herald Tribune's* editor in the years after World War II when it most needed a strong leader. The first Whitelaw Reid established the family fortune by marrying the heiress Elisabeth Mills, thereby, Kluger says, planting the seeds of the paper's eventual doom, for the family treated it as a hereditary possession and never applied the tough business management that would have made it self-supporting. "His newspaper grew more conservative and patently Republican as his own comforts multiplied." He became an absentee owner, indifferent to his paper's health, until by 1901 its profits had all ebbed away.

Overtaken by Adolph Ochs's reinvigorated *New York Times*, Pulitzer's populist *World*, and Hearst's brash *Journal*, Reid chose to cut costs rather than invest family money in his paper, thus reducing it to genteel poverty. The pattern would be repeated often, most suicidally in 1948, when the third-generation Reids, unwilling "to raise fresh capital to combat the *Times*," allowed their designated guru, business manager William E. Ro-

binson, to make massive cuts in the staff and the operating budget. In the family's habitual starvation of their paper Kluger has found one of his main themes and — in Robinson — one of his main villains.

But people, not facts, are what give *The Paper* its strong narrative power. Kluger's 223 interviews must have provided him with enough piquant "quotes" to fill any number of books. His considerable feat is that he has resisted that easy route. Instead, he has absorbed what he has been told about the men and women who worked for the *Herald Tribune*. Like a novelist, he has lived with them for so long that he gives them back to us as well-rounded characters, their virtues and their flaws equitably balanced. He's got just about everybody right.

I found myself back in the grimy city room on West Forty-first Street with all the craftsmen I had once marveled at: the master rewriters (Robert Peck, M. C. Blackman), the eloquent editorial writers (Geoffrey Parsons, Walter Millis), the urbane critics (Virgil Thomson, John Crosby), the graceful sportswriters (Red Smith, Joe H. Palmer), the great reporters (Peter Kihss, Walter Arm), and the glorious eccentrics, the most famous being Lucius Beebe, though I'm glad Kluger didn't miss "Mike" Messo-longhites, a copy editor so paranoid about dirt that he arrived a half-hour early every day, got a huge pile of wadded-up wet paper towels from the men's room, and feverishly scrubbed his chair, his phone, and his portion of the rim of the copy desk. Kluger's account of how Peter Kihss, walking near the Empire State Building just after a plane crashed into its seventy-ninth floor on July 28, 1945, made his way up to the wreck and assembled his memorable story, is one of many small gems that brighten his huge canvas. Two others, illustrative of the *Herald Tribune's* hospitality to talent of every intellectual stripe, describe how the paper acquired Walter Lippmann and Art Buchwald.

But finally it was an editors' paper. They were the custodians of the paper's soul, Kluger notes, and he gives many of them their due in detailed portraits.

Two of the most influential were city editors from Texas. Stanley Walker, who created America's image of the fast-talking city editor, recruited a steady flow of "intelligent and unterrified" young reporters like Joseph Mitchell and St. Clair McKelway and let them develop their own style, thus giving the paper its distinctive warmth and its reputation as "the newspaperman's newspaper." He wrote the paper's first style book and formulated a set of precepts that "helped educate a generation of journalists." The second Texan, L. L. Engelking, was city editor when I arrived — a large and terrifying man who was driven to such cantankerousness in his quest for perfection that he shouted himself right out of the job. But he was "an energizer of talent," and no *Herald Tribune* editor is remembered with more respect.

Two other proud guardians of the paper's honor — one charming and reflective, the other gruff and pragmatic — were the foreign editor Joseph Barnes and the sports editor Stanley Woodward. Barnes, a Russian-speaking scholar and former Moscow correspondent, fought in vain for enough money to cover the complex postwar world with sensitivity and depth. Woodward trained a staff of gifted sportswriters to abhor the purple language and excessive reverence that characterized their trade. No twirlers toed the slab in his pages. Both men were distrusted by the owners for their mettle and were gone by 1948, early casualties of "Whitie" Reid's regime.

So began the era of gimmicks that the Reids thought would make their paper attractive to the masses: tacky columns by the likes of Billy Rose, Hy Gardner, May Mann, and Tex McCrary and Jinx Falkenburg; an "Early Bird" edition that went on sale at 8 P.M.; a green sports section; a shabby little TV guide; an eight-week circulation-boosting contest called "Tangle Towns." In small increments they eroded the character of the paper and drove many of its best people — and best readers — away. (Homer Bigart and Peter Kihss went to the *Times*.) What the new features signified, Kluger says, was "the takeover of the *Tribune* by its business-side mentality."

The erosion was hastened by the ar-

rival of "Brown" Reid, first as Whitie's intrusive younger brother, then as the twenty-nine-year-old president and editor after Whitie was dethroned in a palace revolution. The symbolism of the dark prince ousting the white prince wasn't lost on us: Whitie was at least likable; Brown was swaggering and arrogant. He had achieved a certain power by exploiting the most venomous issue of the day. He saw communists everywhere and smeared them with little or no substantiation in a column called "The Red Underground." His "enormously malign influence" (in the words of the editorial writer August Heckscher) spread fear and shame throughout the city room, which was not immune to his searches through the desk drawers of suspected Reds and his threats of loyalty oaths. Reading Kluger's account of Brown's reckless McCarthyism, which had the covert support of J. Edgar Hoover, I found my stomach tightening again, three decades later. When Brown displaced Whitie at the end of 1954 he might have saved the paper with his raw energy. But his judgment of people was no sounder than his grasp of civil liberties, and his appointment of incompetent henchmen deprived the paper of intelligent leadership and further disgusted the staff.

Kluger blames the paper's decline and fall on Helen Rogers Reid, a figure never far from the center of his narrative. Nowhere is his book more suggestive of a novel — an Edith Wharton novel — than in the story of how Helen Rogers, the youngest of eleven children of a hard-pressed widow in Appleton, Wisconsin, was hired in 1903 by Mrs. Whitelaw Reid as her private secretary. A quick learner about the uses of money and social position, she impressed Elisabeth Mills Reid as just the sort of iron-willed partner her amiable but weak son Ogden needed to run his life. Helen Rogers married him in 1911, went to work for the *Tribune* in 1918, stayed for thirty-seven years, and, "for better or worse, became its driving spirit." Operating mainly through the advertising department, she became the voice of the paper in its role as public citizen. Her annual *Herald Tribune* Forum, a brilliant stroke of promotion, brought statesmen from all over

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the globe to talk about world affairs, and her insistence on the paper's serious coverage of women's issues put her a generation ahead of her time.

But she was "blinded by dynastic pride," Kluger says, refusing to reach outside the family for a strong hand to run the paper after Ogden died in 1947, anointing Whitie instead. Seven years later she "compounded her mistake of installing one unqualified son in the pres-

idency by replacing him with her other unqualified son, who was not yet thirty." Three years later the paper was so mired in debt that the girl from Appleton finally had to go begging. John Hay Whitney, who was then ambassador to Great Britain, bought the paper that the Reids had owned since 1872.

The Whitney years bring *The Paper* to a poignant close, partly because of Klug-

er's obvious fondness for "Jock" Whitney, a decent man who would "never impose himself on anything," and for his quixotic effort to keep the *Herald Tribune* alive, which would finally cost him \$39,476,000. His advisers warned him that the odds were steep, but they also knew how deeply he wanted to succeed. He had a family connection of his own — his grandfather, John Hay, had been one of Greeley's bright young editors — and he saw the paper as a public trust, a way of putting his money to constructive use.

Once again, however, a lack of boldness was the undoing of good intentions. Instead of coming home to direct the rescue, Whitney instructed his proconsul, the "flinty and chilling" Walter Thayer, to find a new president and editor. A year would pass before Thayer selected Robert M. White II, a man ludicrously unprepared for the job — he had been editor of a family newspaper in Missouri with a circulation of 9,000 — and another year would pass before White would be sent back home, having achieved near-invisibility during his turn at the helm. The lost momentum was never regained. Whitney's next-to-last editor, John Denson, still another crazed genius in Kluger's long parade, almost willed the paper back to life by turning its pages into a typographical carnival, making every day seem to have been an exciting one in every corner of the world, whether it had been or not. But his tenure ended abrasively, and the crippling four-month printers' strike of 1962-63 erased his gains.

One last spark, miraculously, remained in the dying patient. The last editor, James Bellows, had a gift for taking a chance on new writers and encouraging them to work in any style that they found congenial. So it was that in its final moments the American newspaper that had provided so much good writing for so long, raising daily journalism to literature, sprang two final prodigies on its long-suffering readers, and Kluger, still writing with pace and vigor, his love of the *Herald Tribune* undiminished, is delighted to see them — two acrobats, Tom Wolfe and Jimmy Breslin, doing high-wire acts of striking originality on the deck of a sinking ship.

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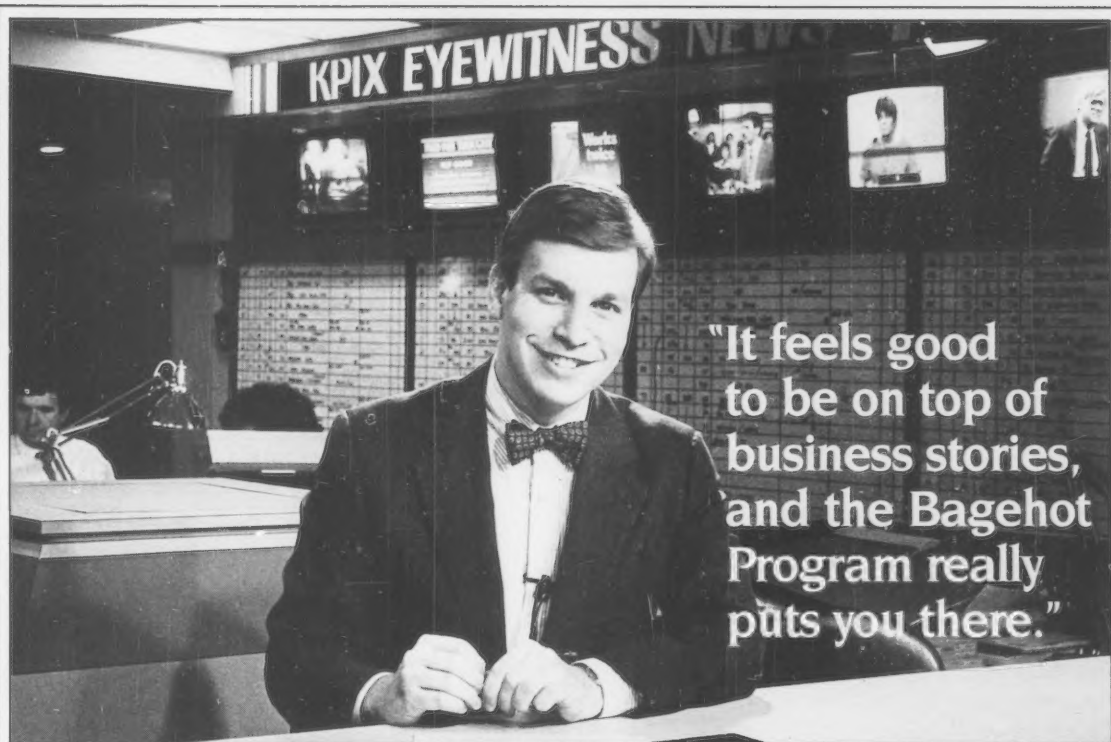
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## Adler vs. CBS, Time, et al

### Reckless Disregard

by Renata Adler

Alfred A. Knopf. 256 pp. \$16.95

by WALTER GOODMAN

In the course of *Reckless Disregard*, Renata Adler's pungent analysis of the 1985 Westmoreland-CBS and Sharon-Time libel suits, the author takes aim at the arrogance of big-league journalism, the obfuscations of the law, and the vagaries of military intelligence, knocking off along the way most of the practitioners of these professions who were involved in the cases. Her sympathies lie with the plaintiffs, General William C. Westmoreland, once commander of America's forces in Vietnam, and the former Israeli Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, who, she argues convincingly, were ill-used by, respectively, a

Walter Goodman is a critic for The New York Times.

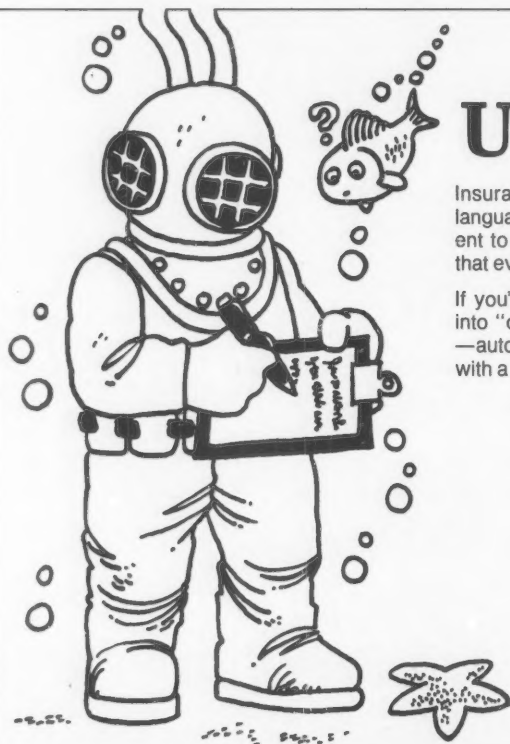
major television network and a major newsmagazine. That is not to say that, under the strict requirements of American libel law, these men had been libeled; but the book leaves no doubt that dubious methods were employed against them by journalists who have yet to express remorse or embarrassment for their actions. (It must be noted that Adler herself is plaintiff in a libel suit against the *Washington Journalism Review* and Condé Nast.)

The details, in brief: On January 23, 1982, CBS broadcast a ninety-minute documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," which exposed what it called "a conspiracy at the highest levels of American military intelligence." For "the highest levels," read General Westmoreland, the program's main target, who was charged with deliberately understating the strength of the North Vietnamese Army and the Vietcong in 1967. The general sued.

The other case began with a cover story in the February 21, 1983, issue of *Time*, "Verdict on the Massacre," pegged to the conclusions of an Israeli

commission formed to place responsibility for the 1982 slaughter of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, in Lebanon. *Time* reported that an appendix to the findings, not published for security reasons, contained details of a visit that General Sharon paid to the family of Bashir Gemayel, the Phalangist leader, a day after his assassination. *Time* wrote that General Sharon "reportedly discussed with the Gemayels the need for the Phalangists to take revenge for the assassination of Bashir. . . ." Some hours after this al-

Editor's note: *Because the publishers of Reckless Disregard refused to release galleys to reviewers in advance of publication, this review is based on the version that appeared in The New Yorker on June 16 and 23. Along with her assurances that she had made no substantial changes for the hard-cover version, Renata Adler also gave Walter Goodman a detailed account of a "coda" she had appended to her magazine articles for inclusion in the book; this addition, in part a response to criticism of her articles by CBS and Time, does not materially affect the issues dealt with in the review.*



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leged discussion, the massacre occurred. The general sued.

Relying mainly on court testimony and depositions, Adler weaves the two cases together and makes plain that both CBS and *Time* failed to meet commonly accepted standards of the journalist's craft. She also demonstrates, with considerable wit, how the peculiar nature of American libel law and the aggressive tactics of the high-powered law firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore, which represented both defendants, made experienced journalists, especially in the *Time* case, seem to have worse memories than reporters ought to have, sloppier checking methods than editors are supposed to have, and less regard for the people who are unfortunate enough to attract their notice than civilized human beings often claim to have. (Adler, who had personal cause to dislike the Cravath firm, which had represented her landlady, the widow of a Cravath partner, in a successful petition to evict Adler from a town-house apartment, has nothing complimentary to say about General Westmoreland's attorney, either, who proved

to be no match for his big-city adversary and had his client surrender before the jury could weigh the evidence.)

Adler makes the point that the natural disposition of journalists and their employers is to view libel suits of any sort as an affront to the First Amendment, as well as to their amour propre. Nothing startling there, but her prose has a way of carrying her too far too vehemently. She discerns "an almost unimaginable solidarity" in the profession, which discourages intra-family criticism. Yet, as she acknowledges, it was *TV Guide*, a big-circulation magazine not celebrated for its daring or seriousness, that ran an article ("Anatomy of a Smear," by Sally Bedell and Don Kowet) that blew the whistle on CBS — and Bedell got a job at *The New York Times* after it appeared. Nonetheless, Adler's charge bears consideration: there are occasions when the defense of the journalist's calling requires criticism of one's professional colleagues. That was surely the situation here.

General Westmoreland withdrew his

suit during the trial. The Sharon verdict was mixed: the jury decided that the paragraph at issue was false and defamatory, but not malicious by the law's definition. In both cases, eminent powers in American journalism were embarrassed by the disclosures of how they do their job, and the job they did on the plaintiffs. Adler tells that mortifying story in scathing detail.

*Time's* discomfiture can be traced to a correspondent named David Halevy, who first passed along the information, attributed to "a highly reliable source," that the Israeli commission's report said that General Sharon told the Gemayels "that he understood their need to take revenge for the assassination of Bashir and assured them that the Israeli army would neither hinder them nor try to stop them." Thus, in Adler's neat image, "a serious news magazine, *Time*, and an enormous corporate edifice, Time Inc., [were] poised, like an improbable ballerina, on a single toe, David Halevy." It was a mighty weak toe. Halevy's testimony left one wondering whether he had a clear idea of the difference be-

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## BOOKS

tween fact and speculation, and, before the trial was over, it was made known that Appendix B contained no reference to any implied go-ahead by General Sharon to the Phalangists.

The toe having collapsed, *Time* was caught flat-footed, yet its editors were compelled to fudge their testimony and make themselves appear either careless or uncaring in their efforts to defend their reliance on Halevy. Adler writes that "the magazine's hierarchy of veteran, seasoned journalists" was transformed by the litigation style of Cravath "into complacent, credulous, patronizing figures, each one incapable of giving a straight answer to a factual question, in his own individual way."

**N**obody expects lawyers in our adversarial system to exert themselves to get at the truth when it interferes with the client's interest, but when journalists dodge and hide, they mock their professed reason for being. The situation might have been created by Evelyn Waugh. As Adler observes, *Time* first presented the Halevy story as

both: Marilyn Church



**Network on trial:** General William C. Westmoreland's attorney, Dan Burt, questioning CBS producer George Crile before Judge Abraham Sofaer. Seated, left to right: Sam Adams, Mike Wallace, the general, and CBS lawyer David Boies.

an important one, and then, after the libel suit was brought, said it was nothing all that new. *Time* and, to a lesser extent, CBS tried to conceal what Adler calls their "own honorable attempts at self-examination" lest the confession that

there was even something to examine work against them at the trial.

The CBS offense was of a different sort. Its documentary was not as flimsily based as the *Time* story, but some of the techniques employed raise questions

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**Newsmagazine on trial:** General Ariel Sharon's attorney, Milton Gould, questioning Time correspondent David Halevy before Judge Pierre Leval, as the general and Mrs. Sharon listen.

about the nature of TV documentaries in general. The toe on which CBS stood was George Crile, the producer of "The Uncounted Enemy." To support his thesis of a "conspiracy," Crile permitted himself a number of liberties that an

internal CBS report would subsequently describe as violations of network policy. He allotted most of his ninety minutes to supporters of his views and allowed little time to at least equally knowledgeable opponents. He gave a friendly wit-

ness an opportunity to screen some material and to strengthen his original interview but left on the cutting-room floor portions of interviews that did not satisfy his preconceptions. He cut and spliced an answer onto the wrong question. He instructed Mike Wallace, his on-camera prosecutor, to "break General Westmoreland and we have the whole thing aced."

Crile, who had been censured by the National News Council in 1980 for editing applause into a documentary, seems to have succumbed to the assumption, often found among TV documentary makers, that the worthiness of their objective justifies unobjective ways of attaining it. The result was the documentary that CBS found itself first heralding and then defending — in Adler's description, ninety minutes of "drums and guns, old footage, music, misleading cuts, the whole arsenal of television's most overwhelming techniques for simulating the authentic." Her summary: "Neither suit should ever have been brought. Once brought, neither suit should have been so aggressively de-

**1986**

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BOOKS

fended. Because neither the ninety minutes nor the paragraph should have been broadcast or published, either."

After her account of the trials ran in *The New Yorker*, *Time* and CBS News issued separate statements charging Adler, in the words of Van Gordon Sauter, then head of CBS News, with "misrepresentations and distortions." The examples cited are not unlike those that make up Adler's case against the network and the news magazine, such as ignoring material that did not suit her thesis and misinterpreting material she did use. In *Reckless Disregard*, Adler commends *The New York Times* for its practice of running corrections and editor's notes about news items that do not meet its standards of accuracy and fairness. But *The New Yorker* is famous for its resistance to even a letters column. By the rules that Adler preaches, the magazine should print at least the most salient criticisms and the response that Adler has appended to the book version of her articles.

A full assessment of the charges against Adler's book requires going back to the transcripts of the trial, a chore that I beg to be pardoned from here. To judge by the testimony cited in the CBS case, military intelligence is so murky an enterprise and its purveyors so accustomed to communicating in code that you can find whatever you need to support any proposition you like.

However, the first point in the CBS complaint seems to me well taken. Noting that military high-ups naturally tend to overstate enemy strength, Adler dismisses the possibility that, in this case, General Westmoreland would have played it down. The whole notion, she scoffs, is "preposterous," an "obvious absurdity." But is it?

Feelings against the war were growing in the late 1960s and Washington was responding with visions of lights at the ends of tunnels and daily body-counts which, if added together, would have depopulated all of Southeast Asia. To go public with the news that the enemy was actually increasing could only have distressed Congress and would assuredly have been used by the anti-Vietnam forces in their vigorous campaign to end the war. It does not follow that General

Westmoreland or anyone else was involved in any "conspiracy," only that the premise of the documentary was not all that absurd. Here, as elsewhere, Adler, who has a law degree of her own, gives way to an aggressively adversarial tone similar to that for which she criticizes the Cravath lawyers.

Adler is exasperated at the workings of libel law in the U.S., where, as she points out, the obstacles confronting a person who feels himself libeled are the most formidable in the world; Generals Westmoreland and Sharon had small chance of coming out ahead. The plaintiff — if he is a public figure — must prove not only that the statements in dispute were false and defamatory and that he was in some way damaged by them but also that they were made with "actual malice." Malice has been redefined to mean "knowledge of falsity" of the material or "reckless disregard" of whether it was false. And that in turn has been redefined to include "serious doubt" as to the truth of the material — which, as Adler points out, is a touch whacky. To doubt something, after all, is usually evidence of good faith, not bad. She writes, in the sort of convoluted construction to which she seems attracted, that it cannot have been the intention of the courts "to protect the polemical writings only of monomaniacs, the incurious, adherents of dogmas, and other persons whose intellectual capacity precludes them, for whatever reason, from having about something they may say or write a serious doubt."

She offers no evidence to support her belief that in order to safeguard themselves against any future libel suit, publications are discouraging internal editorial comments that might later be interpreted as indicating "serious doubt" about a story. But she does demonstrate that the "serious doubt" criterion compels defendants to pretend to be poorer journalists than they can possibly be. *Time's* editors took the stand to express their utter confidence in Halevy, who had run into trouble before over his use of facts and was now relying on New York's "shield law" to refuse to reveal the sources of the misinformation that he had fed to *Time*. Such is the nature of the law that if the defense in either trial

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(In response to a reporter's question March 22, 1985, Portland, Oregon)

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had conceded that any editors or executives had had serious doubts about the stuff provided them by Halevy or Crile, the jury might have taken it as a confession that the defendants had known they were doing wrong — evidence of “malice.” As for the perpetrators, Halevy and Crile adopted “irate, offended, and combative” poses on the stand, pretending in the interests of their employers and what remained of their reputations that they were the aggrieved parties. Like the Westmoreland documentary, the trial was a show, with everyone playing the part assigned by some attorney. The journalists involved in both cases invite Adler’s description of them as considering themselves “a class apart,” “celebrities bearing facts,” arrogantly above the rules.

Among the pleasures of *Reckless Disregard* are the workings of an agile mind as it pursues an argument into unexpected byways. For example, Adler asks those who liked the CBS documentary on political grounds to mull the following: If civilians *had* been counted among the enemy, might not the bombing of hamlets, which was protested because of the toll of civilians, have been justified? Here again, however, the author gets carried away, suggesting that even the killings at My Lai would have been justified.

*Reckless Disregard* would have benefited from a touch of serious doubt on Adler’s part regarding her own thesis. But her indignation gives her work its force, and anyone who takes journalism seriously must share it. For institutional and legal considerations, *Time* and CBS showed themselves incapable of admitting straight out that their practices in these cases did not meet their own standards of professional conduct.

It’s easy to enliven a story or a show by playing around with someone’s reputation, career, life; a network got its show, a newsmagazine got its cover story. The cost was high in legal expenses, and in the cost to the reputation of CBS documentaries and *Time*’s editorial methods. These are powerful organizations, and basic to the moral charge of *Reckless Disregard* is the obligation of the powerful to resist the temptations of power.

## Whump, pow, thump, thud

### Impact: How the Press Affects Federal Policymaking

by Martin Linsky  
W. W. Norton & Company. 260 pp.  
\$19.95

### How the Press Affects Federal Policymaking: Six Case Studies

by Martin Linsky, Jonathan Moore, Wendy O'Donnell, and David Whitman  
W. W. Norton & Company. 379 pages.  
\$25

by ROBERT SHERRILL

Back in 1981 the people who run Harvard’s Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government decided that they didn’t know — and that nobody else knew — very much about the physics of press impact on federal policymaking. So they set up a committee (naturally) of professors and news people, begged some money from a foun-

dation, and went about reviewing the coverage of half a dozen major news events from which, they hoped, some general conclusions could be drawn.

The six studies deal with the role of the press in: the propaganda campaign that ended with the reorganization of the U.S. Post Office; the investigation and resignation of Vice-president Spiro Agnew; the long debate over whether the U.S. should build the neutron bomb; the 1980 relocation of 700 families presumably threatened by toxic-waste poisoning at Love Canal; the huffing and puffing that broke out when President Reagan extended tax exemption to racist private schools (Bob Jones University, for one); and the coverage, especially by television, of the Social Security Administration’s efforts to weed out \$2 billion worth of alleged cheaters on the disability-insurance rolls.

By and large those six studies, even

Robert Sherrill, a longtime Washington reporter, now lives in Tallahassee and is writing a biography of Jimmy Carter.



C.J. Niculae Art

in their most depressing moments, provide some fine entertainment. They are impressively researched insider history.

**B**ut when Martin Linsky, assistant director of the Institute of Politics, interprets the "meaning" of those six press-government encounters and adds what he learned from surveying and interviewing many senior policymakers and sixteen journalists, the result — in the companion volume, *Impact* — comes very close to being pure piffle, a hopscotching from one cliché to another.

"Overall," Linsky writes, "we found that the press and policymakers in Washington are engaged in a continuing struggle to control the view of reality that is presented to the American people. The engagement is highly competitive, but collegial nonetheless. When the media's view and the officials' view are more or less shared, the struggle is more like a waltz. When there is a wide gap, or when early on in a particular issue it is not clear which perspective will predominate or even what the perspectives are, toes are stepped on and there is tension between the partners."

Hey, wow! I hadn't heard that before, not more than a couple hundred times, which is about the same number I'd heard Linsky's observation that there is more tension between officials and reporters today than in 1960, the difference being created by Vietnam and Watergate.

Or how about this socko insight: "As Robert McNamara said, before his government experience he believed that 'all you had to do was figure out the right thing.' He learned, however, that 'you also have to figure out how to explain it to the public.'"

My favorite snoozer: "Over 96 percent of the senior federal policymakers we surveyed said that the press had an impact on federal policy, and over half of them considered the impact substantial."

Linsky adds, "Part of the explanation for this is that everywhere policymakers turn in Washington there are reporters to deal with. Journalists are there, doing their jobs, asking questions, looking for information. The dramatic increase in

the number of Washington-based journalists has extended the reach of the press deeper into the bureaucracy and added to the number of reporters covering those policymakers who were already well-covered. . . . Because the press is such a presence, policymakers spend a lot of time thinking about and dealing with press matters. They use the press to explain themselves to colleagues and constituencies, and to learn what other officials and groups are thinking about them and their programs. They understand that what the press covers and how it covers the news can affect their policies, the way they do their jobs, and their careers. As a consequence, for many policymakers managing the press has become an integral part of their professional routine."

There is something so pat and predictable in those remarks that one tends to nod off while reading them. However, one must remain awake at least long enough to point out that some of the above appraisals are open to question. Linsky makes it sound as if eager reporters are swarming all over the federal government; and yet later he concedes that in some of the most important areas — those dealing with trade, agriculture, economics, and human services — federal policymakers would be downright lonely if they depended on the press corps for company, and that these policymakers, if they want a subject covered, are much more likely than their colleagues in the more glamorous parts of government (White House, State Department, Justice) to have to hunt up reporters and practically bribe them to write a story.

As for Linsky's claim that policymakers are heavy readers, well, the figures he supplies certainly are open to other interpretations. "Seven out of ten senior federal officials use the mass media and the trade press for information about their own policy areas," he writes. Are we supposed to be impressed? The only thing I'm impressed about is that 30 percent of them do *not* read the mass media or the trade press. What the hell do they read? I'm also bowled over by Linsky's findings that "eighty-five percent of those officials say they use the mass media to find out what is going on

in the rest of government." Does that mean — incredible! — that 15 percent of senior federal officials actually do *not* read newspapers or newsmagazines to keep up with the rest of government?

Surveying senior officials and former senior officials about their relationship with the press and about their estimates of the press's impact on their work is pretty tricky, seeing as how one must rely to a great extent on the memories of people whose time in government was often devoted to hiding the truth. Besides, the surveyors must somehow get over the hurdles of pride and ego: Linsky discovered that officials were ready to say that the press had significant influence on others, but were reluctant to admit that they themselves were influenced by it. Henry Kissinger said that the press had shaped his policy decisions from time to time, but, strangely, he couldn't remember a single *specific* occasion when this had happened. Such a plague of forgetfulness makes the survey pretty limp.

**S**o don't waste much time with *Impact*. Stick with those six rich and lively case histories in the other volume. One doesn't need a professorial guide to learn what's wrong with the bumbling and often deceitful officials who crowd these pages, or what's wrong with many of the press folks, over-eager and under-informed, who often react in a simpleminded, wildly subjective, and helter-skelter fashion.

The government's somewhat hysterical "rescue" of Love Canal residents was prompted by a blizzard of news stories that placed too much faith in the early, highly questionable medical findings of chromosome damage. For many months the press seemed to assume that if the Bob Jones tax exemption was being used to win white racist support, the exemption had no intrinsic merit. Throughout the coverage of Social Security's disability reviews, most of the press (particularly TV) emphasized the tear-jerking hardship cases that were unjustly cut off, and virtually ignored the true deadbeat cases that were draining away many millions of dollars.

Still, embarrassing though these histories frequently are, they at least show

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the press erring on the compassionate side, counterbalancing the government's Gradgrindisms. In two other case histories, however — the neutron bomb and the Post Office — the press's conduct has fewer redeeming qualities.

When sharp-eyed Walter Pincus of *The Washington Post* discovered deep within an appropriations bill money to begin building the neutron bomb — the

bomb that "kills people and leaves buildings standing" — editorial writers (particularly *The Washington Post's*) had a great time sounding aghast. Pronuke and anti-nuke forces grappled for months. Unfortunately, as arms debates go, it was pretty unenlightening, if not downright dumb, as Pincus himself would later admit. The press never thoroughly explained that in fact the neutron

bomb wasn't so different from, and produced far less blast and radiation than, some of the other missiles already deployed in western Europe.

President Carter, who had just arrived in Washington after a campaign of promising to reduce our supply of nuclear bombs, was caught flat-footed. He had never heard of the neutron bomb. He had no intention of being cast as a bomb-crazed ogre, and he was particularly irritated that European politicians were dumping on him and refusing to take some responsibility for the planned deployment of the bombs, so after first saying he was going to defer production he switched and cancelled production. It was a pretty sensible thing to do, under the circumstances, but much of the press, including those editorial writers who at first had been too horrified to even contemplate the bomb, now began denouncing him as a wishy-washy wimp. The press, in short, had progressed from incompleteness to unfairness.

The Post Office study is the story of how the press cooperated with Nixon's postmaster, Winton Blount, to finagle legislation through Congress to make the Post Office a semi-independent corporation under the thumb of big business. Lobbying was spearheaded by a "front" organization — which pretended to be grass roots but in fact was led and mostly paid for by large corporations — that allowed Blount and other postal officials to, if not break the law, at least skirt it very closely. Federal statute forbids bureaucrats from spending their time or our tax money on efforts to influence congressional votes. Blount reportedly lobbied congressmen with promises of new post offices, political patronage jobs, and help in their next election. The press didn't dig into those irregularities. Instead, editorial-page editors "enjoyed being spoon-fed information" and a number of major newspapers and news-magazines happily made space for stories concocted by Blount's front organization. Jerry Bruno, the front's chief lobbyist in the field, reported, "We had tremendous success with the newspapers; they'd publish anything we want."

Six good lessons. ■

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## Elliott Abrams replies

### TO THE REVIEW:

After reading "The State Department's Patsy Picker" (CJR, September/October), I found myself wondering if the person to whom members of my staff and I spoke several times was really Jay R. Begun or some imposter.

Begun apparently started his work with the assumption that a public official is not permitted to choose his appearances but is compelled by the Constitution to accept the judgment of television producers or program sponsors as to what constitutes an appropriate program. Apparently, only journalists and policy critics are to be allowed the privilege of "picking their patsies." Beyond that assumption, however, your author simply got several facts wrong and omitted some important information.

Begun is wrong when he states that I told *From the Editor's Desk* that I would not appear unless Christopher Hitchens was taken off the program. In fact, I wrote Richard Hefner, the host, that I did not believe news programs should allow their guests to dictate who their questioners will be. I made no attempt to have Hitchens replaced; I simply reserved my right not to appear with someone who is far outside of the American political mainstream.

In discussing the Harvard program, Begun neglected to mention that the Kennedy School's policy is to allow its guests to approve their questioners on the panel. Through an oversight, the organizers of the program on which I appeared neglected to give me this opportunity until [former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador] Robert White was invited, a fact which was included in other press reports. As events in Central America have evolved, Mr. White has become a discredited critic of administration policy, and I see no reason to enhance his credibility by sharing a platform with him. And I certainly see no reason why every single guest at the Kennedy School should be allowed to approve the panel except me.

Being wrong on the issues has not dampened Aryeh Neier's enthusiasm for public debate, and while I do not look forward to

appearing with him, I have done so in the past and I expect to do so again. Your author is just plain wrong on this one, too.

I did not appear on the Canadian Broadcasting Company's *Journal* program because I believed that the director of the Office of Cuban Affairs, who deals daily with Cuban issues, was the best person to participate in a program dealing with Cuba in such historical detail. Neither my staff nor I was familiar with Linden McIntyre's work, but we have a great deal of respect for *Journal* and have cooperated with the program on several occasions. We were not aware at the time of the request that Wayne Smith would also be interviewed. Although Smith's comments on Cuba have become predictable, his participation was not a factor in my not appearing. I've always had a civil relationship with Mr. Smith and would assume that sooner or later we will end up on another panel together somewhere. Here, too, your author got his facts wrong.

Our criticism of the CBC program arose after it aired, and would seem reasonable to anyone who views it: the program was generous in its treatment of critics, including Mr. Smith, and threw out all but a few seconds of the forty-five-minute interview Mr. McIntyre conducted with our Cuba specialist. Under the circumstances, we would have to seriously consider whether we would ever participate in a program by Mr. McIntyre in the future.

I have never met Jane Wallace, but I am familiar with *West 57th*. I consider it an entertainment program, not serious journalism like *MacNeill/Lehrer* or *Nightline*. Members of my staff, however, are familiar with Wallace's work. They strongly advised me not to appear on the program because they did not trust Wallace to give the State Department fair treatment. Our position was vindicated when the program on Haiti aired.

I will not apologize for refusing to appear in public with certain individuals or to participate in certain broadcasts. I have appeared on scores of television programs and public platforms, and have explained and defended U.S. policy before critics and public in an open and straightforward manner. To claim that I shrink from critics is patently ridiculous.

However, as a public servant and an American citizen, I have a right and a responsibility to judge in each case whether the forum offers a fair opportunity to discuss the administration's position. No one either in or out of government accepts uncritically any invitation handed to him unless he is a masochist or is desperate for public exposure. I am neither.

ELLIOTT ABRAMS  
Assistant Secretary of State  
for Inter-American Affairs  
Department of State  
Washington, D.C.

Jay R. Begun replies: *Elliott Abrams's statements reinforce some points in my piece and misrepresent others. He is disingenuous when he denies having pressured Janice Elsesser, the producer of From the Editor's Desk, to remove Christopher Hitchens from the program. After agreeing to appear on the show, Abrams had his press secretary, Gregory Lagana, telephone Elsesser the morning of the show's taping. According to Elsesser, Lagana said that Abrams would not be questioned by Hitchens. (Lagana confirmed this.)*

*In his letter, Abrams says I am "just plain wrong" in asserting that he and his staff made it clear that he would not consent to appear on programs with Aryeh Neier, vice-chairman of Americas Watch. However, when originally interviewed, Abrams spoke of the impossibility of conducting meaningful debates with Neier. I should add that I read Abrams's blacklist — the seven people Abrams will not appear with for one reason or another — to Lagana, and Lagana confirmed Neier's presence on the list. (He also mentioned Wayne Smith as part of the group with whom Abrams would not appear.)*

## Journalistic malpractice?

### TO THE REVIEW:

As communications officer of the nation's largest medical malpractice insurance company, I was astounded to learn you awarded a Laurel to *The Orlando Sentinel's* recent medical malpractice series (CJR, July/August). These articles contained errors, misinterpretations of complex data, and mis-



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leading statements — not the least of which is the assertion that medical malpractice claims, as *CJR* reported, "are not increasing as fast as doctors and insurance companies say." More disturbing, however, is your charge that insurers "doctored" statistics and the newspaper's allegation that insurers inflated or exaggerated statistics.

At the St. Paul, we take such charges very seriously. My company has a 133-year tradition of fair dealing. The mere suggestion of unethical behavior on our part is repugnant. If there were any truth to the charge that medical liability insurers "doctored" statistics, such activity would have been found long ago by state insurance regulators or by the IRS, the GAO, the FTC, or the SEC. In fact, the Justice Department recently concluded there is no evidence to support that allegation.

For the record, let me state for you, as I did for the *Sentinel* reporter, that St. Paul statistics nationwide show a dramatic jump in the cost of resolving medical liability claims and a steady rise in the actual number of claims. We stand by those figures.

I and my staff talked frequently on the phone with *Sentinel* reporter Rosemary Goudreau and sent her data as the series was being prepared for publication. We also offered to arrange face-to-face meetings between her and our executives — either here in our Minnesota home office or in Florida. Ms. Goudreau declined to come to Minnesota and did not show up for the interview in Florida we arranged.

I can't help wondering how different the series' conclusions might have been if the reporters really had conducted in-depth interviews with experts from key medical malpractice insurers. The reporters apparently erroneously felt that their interviews with two recently created and financially troubled insurance mechanisms (the Florida Patient's Compensation Fund, a government entity, and the Florida Physicians Insurance Reciprocal, a not-for-profit doctors' organization) were sufficient to make sweeping indictments of medical liability insurers. Obviously, we disagree.

JAMES A. SNYDER  
Communications officer  
St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Co.  
St. Paul, Minn.

### TO THE REVIEW:

In awarding a Laurel to *The Orlando Sentinel* for its eight-part series on medical malpractice, the *Review*, summarizing the series' findings, asserts that Florida tort reform proposals were being based "on doctored statistics supplied by the insurance industry."

Regrettably, *CJR* was careless, at least twice.

Without focusing on other aspects of the *Sentinel* series, it alleges: "Insurance companies inflate the number of malpractice claims made in the state by an average of 40 percent a year." The data reported by the *Sentinel* to support that statement reflect only the practices of the Patient's Compensation Fund, a state-authorized organization in which the insurance industry has no role. Offers to the *Sentinel* reporters by the largest private insurance underwriter of medical malpractice in Florida to visit its offices and review its records were declined and an appointment in Orlando with a senior officer of that company (who had traveled hundreds of miles) was not kept.

In short, you praised a sweeping charge against "insurance companies" that was based on statistics for the Patient's Compensation Fund, which is not usually considered as part of the insurance industry; provides only excess coverage — insurance for that portion of losses above \$150,000 for physicians and \$100,000 for hospitals; and must be rescued financially with special assessments, because of its losses, if it's to stay in business.

Worse, your write-up referred to "doctored statistics." Nowhere in the *Sentinel* series is it charged that the PCF, let alone the "insurance industry," doctored any data. Perhaps your writer was attempting to be clever, but "doctored" has a specific and serious denotation, which is that numbers were altered with the intent to deceive. At most, the *Sentinel* reporters, experts after nine months, concluded that they disagreed with PCF's established, consistent procedure for setting up files for excess insurance claims. These reporters assert that the PCF's procedure — now supervised by a former regulator — "exaggerates" or "inflates" or "distorts," which are matters of interpretation and judgment, not violations of law, moral or state-made.

WARREN LEVY  
Vice-president, Field Services  
Insurance Information Institute  
New York, N.Y.

Rosemary Goudreau and Alex Beasley of *The Orlando Sentinel* reply: *The insurance industry's response to the Sentinel's disclosures on medical malpractice and to CJR's recognition of that series is about as lame as the industry's characterization of what's really happening with the malpractice crisis.*

*One of our key findings was that the insurance industry grossly exaggerates the number of malpractice claims. That finding was based not on the records of a single*

company, as Mr. Levy argues, but on the examination of thousands of records at the Florida Department of Insurance.

That's how we found out that 40 percent of the so-called malpractice claims involve no compensation to patients and no cost to defend. And why? Because telephone calls from upset patients and queries from attorneys about patient records are automatically counted as malpractice claims even though nothing ever comes of them. Imagine the number of libel claims newspapers could report if every call from an angry reader were counted as a claim. That's exactly what's happening with medical malpractice.

James Snyder of the St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company is almost right about one thing, though, when he says that, if such were the truth, then government agencies would have found out about it. Well, GAO investigators already have found out about these "telephone-call claims" and are excluding them from their own examination of the malpractice crisis.

Regrettably, an interview with a St. Paul spokesman was missed, though we did spend many hours talking with other St. Paul representatives.

### Free-for-all: a replay

#### TO THE REVIEW:

In case any of your readers are tempted to make the mistake of thinking that Michael Massing's report on the CBS annual meeting was an accurate portrayal of what took place ("The Annual CBS Free-for-all," *CJR*, July/August), permit me to invoke the evidence of the official transcript.

Massing says that "all hell" broke loose when I rose to nominate a director for the CBS board. This suggests shouting, screaming, turmoil in the hall, and consternation on the dais. The truth is that I was recognized by the chair, nominated Mr. Wilson C. Lucom as a director, delivered a 450-word prepared statement in support of the nomination, with no interruptions, and, in response to a question from Chairman Wyman, gave assurances that Mr. Lucom would be willing to serve if elected and was an American citizen. This was all done in an orderly and polite manner.

Massing describes the remarks of James Cain of Fairness In Media as "about the Soviet threat and leftist insurgencies." Mr. Cain moved a resolution that would restrict the power of the board to resist takeovers. Mr. Cain uttered about 600 words in describing and supporting that resolution; exactly 36 of those concerned the Soviet threat and in-

surgency in Central America.

Massing, in discussing my resolution that CBS hire an ombudsman, badly distorts the justification for this. I didn't say CBS had failed to treat my letters with respect. I said that the individual responsible for dealing with complaints of the type AIM makes routinely seeks to justify whatever CBS has done instead of investigating to determine if there is any merit to the criticism. The latter is what an ombudsman is supposed to do. What CBS now has is a flack, and I demonstrated that by citing examples of some of his responses. I was not doing an imitation of Rodney Dangerfield.

In response, Mr. Wyman did not say that CBS "already employs at least two people working full time to respond to AIM's letters." He said the network had two people "working essentially full time with this responsibility," i.e., analyzing and responding to complaints such as ours. They would be seriously underemployed if they worked only on AIM letters.

Massing trivializes the discussion of my resolution calling for testing CBS employees for drug use. He says I "described a nation of reporters strung out on cocaine." Actually, I reported on the concerns about drug abuse among newspaper employees expressed at the ASNE convention this year. I pointed out that some major newspapers had instituted partial drug tests and that the *Los Angeles Times* had revealed that over 12 percent of its job applicants tested positive for drug use. I said the media had played down the dangers of marijuana and cocaine for many years, and I believed that one reason for this grave error was that many journalists were drug users. The 250 words I spoke took about two minutes.

Massing also skipped over Dr. Hycel Taylor, the national president of Operation PUSH, who discussed that organization's grievances against WBBM-TV in Chicago at some length, leaving the impression that the Rev. Jesse Jackson was the only black who spoke. I noted that while both these gentlemen spoke at greater length and expressed their criticisms of CBS policies at least as bluntly as I did, Massing did not accuse them of delivering monologues, nor did he suggest that all hell broke loose when they took the floor. This being his first CBS annual meeting, apparently, he seems not to have realized that the unprecedented musical entertainment by a black jazz combo was part of the red-carpet treatment laid on for Jesse Jackson's benefit. Nor did he note that the management team was deferential to Jackson to the point of being obsequious.

Since Massing doesn't know what has

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gone on at previous CBS meetings, he is hardly in a position to judge whether or not the climate was different at this one. CBS has never warmly embraced its critics at these meetings. They would much prefer that we not show up. But I'm sure they are happy to have reporters such as Michael Massing in attendance, since they can be counted on to slant their stories to try to make the critics look foolish. Next time, I hope the *Review* will try sending a straight reporter to the meeting.

REED IRVINE  
Chairman  
Accuracy in Media, Inc.  
Washington, D.C.

Michael Massing replies: *Given the bureaucratic calm that had prevailed at the proceedings prior to Mr. Irvine's speech, and the manner in which he attacked Walter Cronkite for his alleged espousal of unilateral disarmament, my use of the phrase "all hell broke loose" seemed justified. With regard to Thomas Wyman's remark about employing two people full-time to respond to letters, a re-examination of the transcript shows that, whatever he may have had in mind, when he made the comment he referred specifically to AIM.*

*Irvine's proposed resolution demanding drug testing at CBS was offered without the slightest shred of evidence that a problem existed there; it seemed simply to provide AIM with another stick with which to beat the network. Wyman rejected the resolution as being out of order.*

*Space limitations prevented me from mentioning Hycle Taylor, who in any case was only a warm-up for Jesse Jackson's main act. As for Irvine's observation that I didn't grasp the real significance of the black jazz combo, this was the precise point of the last sentence of my piece, where I wondered whether the presence of Wynton Marsalis "was entirely coincidental."*

*Finally, Irvine is upset because I described Wyman only as deferential and not obsequious. I refer him to AIM's own report on the meeting, which states that "Mr. Wyman was polite, even deferential, toward Jackson. . . ."*

**TO THE REVIEW:**

I was amused indeed that in the course of Michael Massing's massively inaccurate effort to depict Reed Irvine as a riot-maker, he deigned to shovel a little in my direction.

Massing reports that I am "best known for [my] bright red blazers." Has Massing failed to notice the average of five to ten other White House correspondents who, at presi-

dential news conferences, also wear bright red? Has he failed to notice the significant number of red-dressed ladies? Has CJR become sexist?

Massing also writes that I pose "bizarre questions" at press briefings. Sadly, your readers are left with having to accept his word (and ruling) because Massing provides not even one example of my questions which he alleges to be bizarre. He does, however, add, parenthetically: "He once provoked Hodding Carter into throwing a rubber chicken at him." Since I have never thrown *anything* at this former assistant secretary of state, just who is it that is bizarre in this one illustration which Massing provides? An assistant secretary of state who throws things, or a columnist-broadcaster who asks a question? Was the question I asked Hurling Hodding that day really "bizarre" enough to justify what Hodding did?

Sad to say, your reporter didn't bother to ask me about this. The question I asked Hodding was why our ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, had been campaigning for a congressional candidate (Bill Gray) in north Philadelphia against incumbent Congressman Robert Nix, chairman of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee, when President Carter seriously needed Nix's support for his civil-service bill. Instead of trying to answer my question, Hodding (quite cleverly) pulled out a two-foot rubber chicken, which he hurled at me. It missed. But this evoked headlines all over the country: CHICKEN A LA FLING.

The following day I appeared at Hodding's daily news briefing — and, when his attention was diverted, I put on a catcher's mask. None of the Big Media reported this. And only *The Washington Post* reported, one year previously, yet another clever Hodding evasion of another of my questions about Andy Young. In that instance, Hodding pulled a gun on me. It was a rubber-band gun — which he fired, missing me, but hitting the (innocent and astonished) correspondent for a Saudi Arabian periodical.

Hodding's repeated missings hardly approximate all that is missing in Massing.

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Rutland (Vt.) Herald 4/14/86

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The Blade-Tribune (Oceanside, Calif.) 6/3/86

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The Sunday Observer-Dispatch (Utica, N.Y.) 9/7/86

A police spokesman, Lieut. Thomas Fahey, said that the gunman had used a 9-millimeter pistol and that the police did not know how many bullets he had fired. It is decorated with hanging plants and has a wide mirror at one end.

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